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Australia's magazine of the performing arts. March 1980 \$1.95*

Theatre Australia

Adelaide Festival
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BERLIN
Komische Oper
BALLET

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Theatre Australia

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BERLIN KOMISCHE OPER BALLET

INTRODUCTION

NOT ANOTHER SWAN LAKE

SOME FACTS ABOUT THE KOMISCHE OPER

SOME OF THE DANCERS

STATE THEATRE COMPANY



MYSTERY PLAYS OF WAKEFIELD

ADAPTED BY COLIN GEORGE

1980 ADELAIDE FESTIVAL AT THE PLAYHOUSE

COMMENT

Bringing the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet to Australia has been a massive undertaking. Christopher Hunt of the Adelaide Festival, who flew to Berlin and contacted Donald MacDonald of AOC Paradies, who sent off their production manager to East Germany to see what could be done. It needed a consortium of the Adelaide Festival and this major antiprecursor group, together with the sponsorship of BP, to bring out the only artist and arrange for the performance of Australia's symphony orchestras of Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne.

This is not just a fine company presenting an excellent version of *Die an Lake This* is a version more true to Tchaikovsky's original conception than perhaps any production since its first controversial performance. Like postulation by nineteenth century universities, conventionalised by more than a century of standard productions, has been cleared away to reveal the heart of the work — a story of romantic passion almost desperate in its intensity. Over a long period, meticulous research into Tchaikovsky's original score, story line, and intentions formed the basis for this production.

It is well known that in both their sporting and cultural activities the Eastern Block countries subscribe to a degree unheard of in the West. We need think only of the Berliner Ensemble, set up, and re-set up, by Brecht at the Tadeusz Kantor, the star of the last Adelaide Festival, has produced no more than a handful of works in twenty years.

These two producer-director writers (along with Peter Brook, whose whom more lately have worked more in line with the modern approach) of contemporary dance companies, and that of drama companies in that they have been totally responsible, with their respective performers, for the creation of original works.

In this country, too, we notice that it is the dance companies who have taken the lead in generating performance works from within the group, and allowing themselves the time, as opposed to the constant run-over of protest, that makes this possible in the Sydney Dance Company and the Australian Dance Theatre of Adelaide, both artistic directions — respectively Graeme Murphy and Jonathan Taylor — are the major choreographers for their companies. Their works are specifically created with and for their own performers and take new shapes not only in content, but also in form. Both

choreographers seek inspiration from and representation of the Australian life they see around them — so Murphy's *Witness* and *Sensations* and Taylor's *Incident at Wolf Creek* — but also embrace universal themes as in Murphy's full length ballet *Poppo* on the life of Ciccio, or Taylor's outrageous *Goldman*.

In the theatre world a major proponent of this approach is the West in Peter Brook, who to appear at Adelaide. Again there is the mix of the particular — namely *Jarry's Obs*, though scripted absolutely as a performance piece in itself — and the general. *The Act and Conference of the World*, which have been performed in Africa and Iran. There is also a deeper elegance in that a major aim is to discover a universal theatrical language.

Brook is relieved here for when the Australia Council Limited Life scheme was first being used. Bob Adams, Director of the Theatre Board, saw *Conference of the World* particularly as the model for the kind of antipodean scheme would lead. As such the brief was extremely in its implications, the funding only as best adequate and too short term, and the responsibility on artists involved enormous.

The one offering we have had so far seems to have truly raised the mark. Perhaps putting all the eggs for this kind of work in one basket is foolish. Rather the larger theatre companies and Summer's *Atkinson 2* at the MTC may well be a step in this direction should also find some way of accommodating compromised performance-based work into their operation. The enormous requirements of constant public performance should be set aside in this area.

IN creative time and money are essential, but it is increasingly being noticed that our theatre scene is presently limited. If some new incentives are not found either in the way, or as Jack Hibbard's idea of breaking down the monopolies into smaller, more vital groups, not only is there little sign of fresh wind to carry us out of the doldrums, but war by, withdrawn their companies will want more their entrenchment as service industries in the future field.

Asking for more money at a time of economic recession may appear naive, but public money should not only be a cushion against business failure, they should relate to excellence, the right to fail and above all the need for new creation.

Theatre Australia

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I N F O

Adelaide Festival Fringe activities, still collectively grouped under the curious moniker, Focus, seem set to provide a varied and inexpensive alternative to the official programme. An early press release gives details already of over thirty events, grouped under the headings Dance, Drama, Street Performers, Music, Galleries and Exhibitions. And, since it was the nature of Fringe offerings often to be last minute, spontaneous affairs, one imagines there will be more...

The scope is far-reaching. In drama alone there are such widely differing productions as *Hamlet's Last Half Hour*, *Otello's Crimes Of Passion*, *Congreve's Wit of the World*, late night revues and a new play from Adelaide playwright, Anthony Thorogood, and this only on the local front. From interstate come Victoria's WEST Community Theatre with rock musical *Ruff Ruff*,

Performance Dead from Melbourne University, and the Flying Trapeze troupe who are to join with Adelaide groups in cabaret. Topping the Drama bill are the Cambridge Footlights from UK's Cambridge University, whose reputation goes before them, having spawned in the past the now legendary *Beyond The Fringe* programme, as well as other well known names in British comedy.

Ian Spink, described as one of Australia's most exciting young choreographers, is visiting the Festival in an official capacity to work for State Opera Company's *Death In Venice*. His company, Spink Inc, will present "26 solos and Other Dances" for Focus. Alongside him in the arena of dance and music are several groups and individuals from Adelaide and interstate. Street performers range from dance to puppetry and clowning. See 1-5?



Carl Morrow, Graeme Murphy and Paul Saliba of the Sydney Dance Co

Graeme Murphy and his newly named Sydney Dance Company are back in action after a five week holiday period having some exciting new talent for 1980. Dynamic Australian dancer Paul Saliba has returned home after two years with the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York to join Murphy's company as dancer teacher choreographer. His first new work for the company will form part of the Sydney Opera House season which starts on May 22.

After seven years with the much acclaimed Stuttgart Ballet in Europe and elevation to soloist status, dancer Carl Morrow opted to return to Australia with his new wife Dorothea. After the Stuttgart's successful New York season he headed for Sydney to see the Australian Festival of Dance where companies around Australia were on display, at the Sydney Opera

House. Murphy and the SDC performed two works on the Festival, *Spectrums* and *Sherrycade*, both of which helped to achieve a new level of popularity for the company during 1979 and reconfirmed Carl Morrow's suspicion that Murphy's was the company for him.

The SDC's season at the Drama Theatre for 1980 has been expanded to eight weeks with fifty two performances comprising three programmes by the best Australian choreographers available, including Barry Moreland, an Australian resident in London whose works best known to Australian audiences include *Prodigal Son* for London Festival Ballet and *Travellers* for the Australian Ballet.

The season includes the premiere of Graeme Murphy's *Daphne and Chloe* and *Franklin*, using Richard Meale's beautiful score of the same name.



Dancer Bechthold and Dora Gregory in Spink Inc's "26



Richard Bradshaw

The Combined Talents of puppeteer Richard Bradshaw, cartoonist Patrick Cook and singer-songwriter Robert Archer are about to launch *Captain Lazar and his Earthbound Circus* on the world.

They are inviting audiences to "gasp at the spectacular cost of doleens" as their puppet cabaret for the Marionette Theatre of Australia, which is premiering at the Adelaide Festival in The Space from March 18, and will then go to the Sydney Opera House Recording Hall for a month from March 19. If all goes well, Melbourne will see the show later, in June.

Captain Lazar will be well known to readers of the *National Times* where he sprang from the inspired pen of Patrick Cook. In puppet form his Earth-

bound Circus will be created by five puppeteers working from underneath. It is not a puppet show for children, "You'll laugh, you'll cry, you'll leave your children at home and you'll be glad you did", they say.

Members of the Circus include such characters as Trevor Wittenstein, lately of *Dunsen*, Professor of Applied Dyslexia, with a whole ventriloquist act, there's Brian the Giraffe King, a whale cartoonist that sings Gilbert and Sullivan, and Marion Burmans, who has an uncanny resemblance to a certain prime minister, is a Minister of the Ethnic Arts and has a kooka act.

And with all this is music, produced by a group of four who will make up a jug band, euphonium, guitar and vocals, fiddle, mandolin and percussion.

Nancy Hays is off to the Adelaide Festival this month with the Sydney Theatre Company. And what's the show?

"Over recent months when asked what I was doing next, the reply 'I'm Giving My Act Together And Taking It On The Road' has usually been greeted with 'Well, I always wondered why you didn't have an act. Where are you taking it?' The 'it' in question is the subject of a musical by Gretchen Cryer and Nancy Ford currently playing its second year at downtown Circle in the Square, New York. At a performance I attended during my recent trip, it was enthusiastically received and engendered a lively discussion afterwards between cast and audience.

"When Richard Wherrett decided to include a musical in his first Sydney Theatre

Company season I was delighted that more and more music theatre was beginning to take its place in the repertoire of our state companies. Musicals, on a large scale, are an expensive proposition, but the small-scale production such as *Art* lends itself to consideration. It has a cast of eight including the musicians who play a very active part in the show.

"With these new opportunities opening up for the presentation of musical plays I hope it will encourage the creation of original material to place Australian Music Theatre in the healthy state our plays now enjoy. Indeed, with the current export of our productions to London and New York, it would appear that at last we are getting our act together and taking it on the road."



Nancy Hays

I N F O

As We Are... "We can't alter the lights, they're all set up for *Olivia* next week..." said a stage manager in a Western Australian country town to actress Beverly Dunn. Now after a tour of five states Beverly will present her one-woman show, *As We Are*, at the Melbourne Theatre Company's Athenaeum 2, starting on March 31.

Beverly has made an extensive search through diaries, journals, letters and stories by Australian writers and dressed *As We Are* to show the variety of the Australian people, from the early settlers to contemporary men and women.

"In choosing the material I have three criteria," Beverly said. "It has to entertain me, it has to move me, to make me think, laugh or cry. And does it have something to say about us as Australians?"

Using the settings of Australians like Rachel Hervey, Aboriginal poet Jack Davis, Georgina McCann, Mary Gilmore, Patsy Adam-Smith, Nancy King, Beth Parsons, Tom Hungerford and Mary McCormick, Beverly has woven a humorous, moving two hour entertainment.

As We Are received its premiere at the Festival of Perth in March 1978 and Beverly has subsequently toured the production to Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory, Victoria country centres and Western Australia.

As We Are is devised by Beverly Dunn and directed by Don Mackay.



Alton Harvey, the Music Hall's on stage villain, last year.

The Music Hall opened its twenty fifth production on Friday February 8, a re-run of *Ear Line*, their first and most popular show. This production is directed by Alton Harvey who also plays the villainous Sir Francis Levison.

But off stage there is a different villain involved in the affairs of the Music Hall, with whom they seem to be so unpopular that there is a distinct possibility that the show may have to close for the last time.

In 1978 there was a change in the Theatres and Public Halls Act which came to include the Music

Hall, who had previously operated under the aegis of the Department of Justice. As the very first theatre restaurant, the only way they could get around regulations when they started in 1961 was to operate as a restaurant with a floor show.

Following such incidents as a fire at the Savoy Hotel, Kings Cross, theatre restaurants came under the Theatres and Public Halls Act for the first time and became subject to the more stringent safety regulations. Places like Bunratty Castle and the Marly Music Loft are also having difficulties, and the Kilburn 680 Theatre had to close some eighteen

months ago.

George Miller at the Music Hall has done an enormous amount to comply with the requests of the Department of Services and the North Sydney Council. He has reduced his patrons to approximately four hundred, he has modified productions to fit the requirements, with the result that *Ear Line* is a much smaller production than we have been used to, there is no longer a revolve and indeed the whole stage area has been reduced from 100 to 50 square metres and is enclosed on all sides except the audience's in a "fire check" capsule. Added to this the dressing rooms have been altered and two fire escapes fitted to the theatre.

George Miller used to run a newspaper called *The Northern News*, which gave a good deal of exposure to the dealings of the North Sydney Council, including the notorious Sir Arno affair. He is now afraid that personal animosity is rearing its head in the shape of unreasonable requests, such as that the Music Hall should not have opened on February 8 on pain of Equity Court injunction, in spite of the fact that other demands are currently being met.

Miller has gone ahead, and intends to continue, but if such action continues he and his wife will regretfully sell, or close down, the theatre and again his daughter in London.

If this should happen the closing of the villain would become something other than the delightful entertainment it has been for the past twenty five years at Neutral Bay.



RTC Director Peter Barclay

Trucking into the *Lightbox*, The Riverina Trucking Company has recently appointed Peter Barclay as its Artistic Director for 1980. Barclay has worked for Nimrod and the Hunter Valley Theatre Company.

"We are in the midst of planning our first season. It will reflect our intention to expand the programmatic image of RTC through a commitment to new writing. We are extremely excited to be premiering an Australian piece by Mick Rodger about Don (Mad Dog) Morgan, the picturesque figure from the colonial past of Southern New South Wales which will play in Wagga and then tour the region for three weeks with the assistance of the Arts Council."

Barclay recognises the importance of community involvement in regional theatre. "Besides maintaining our in-house activities we want to move into the streets and capture the

imagination of the local community. We intend to start classes and have just appointed Gordon Scottie as Community Director. Gordon will begin a programmatic of community projects aligned to regional festivals and events such as the Wagga Agricultural Show."

At the moment RTC is negotiating tours in the region, and eventually hopes to find an opening for a short season in Sydney. "The profession as a whole practitioners and particularly the funding bodies must recognise a commitment to regional companies. We have taken on the role once carried out by the great touring companies in the Depression and the thirties. We bring professional theatre to remote country areas, and with thought and energy could alleviate the problems of regional tours by large companies from the capital cities. Let ours not be the fate of JCW's Amen."

Polygon Theatre Company, based in Hobart, began its 1980 programme with *The Golden Pathway Annual*, touring Tasmania, and the second production, *The Glass Menagerie* which will also be seen in Hobart and on tour, opens in early April.

A healthy subsidy from the Tasmanian Arts Advisory Board for 1980 has been welcomed with relief by Polygon's director, Don Gay, who has steered the company since its formation in 1976. The subsidy means that Polygon is at last able to establish itself on a professional basis (albeit a modest one).

It is now virtually the only Tasmanian theatre company offering regular paid work to actors. Disputes, the limited population (accentuated by the northward migration of the aspiring young) can make existing problematic. Rehearsals quite often have to be fitted around filming, radio and television recording schedules, as the case of experienced actors in Hobart is small and they continually work across-media.

The determination to take theatre throughout the state, and a commitment to school curriculum performance means that Polygon necessarily avoids large-scale productions in favour of portable ensemble pieces. Thus previous offerings



Don Gay

have been "chamber" plays, musicals and theatre restaurant though 1980 will see *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* and *The Road; Horror Show* in Hobart. *Bath R and G* and *Glass Menagerie* are HSC texts, as was 1979's *She Stoops To Conquer*. Polygon sees its educational role as being a vital one.

Don Gay hopes that future developments may include the employment of an administrator and possibly also a designer. He intends to continue expanding the programme and touring as much as possible (perhaps interstate as well as at home) and to perform material by local writers. His continuing nightmares include the lack of suitable performing spaces throughout the state, and, naturally, the balancing of income and expenditure. Grateful as he is that TAAB have stepped in, he is usually aware of the need to supplement their assistance from other sources. Bruce Corbitt

Apologies to Melbourne photographer, Donald Parker, who we unfortunately failed to credit for his superb cover shot of Noel Ferrier and Frederick Panflow on our Christmas edition.

Theatre Australia



NIMROD

505 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010 (02) 699 5003

Nimrod Upstairs
from Wednesday 12 March

THE HOUSE OF THE DEAF MAN

John Anthony King
director John Bell
designer Ray Carpenter
Paul Bertons, Brian Fitzsimmons, Joseph Funt,
Vivienne Garrett, Deborah Kennedy,
Brian McDermott, Kerry Walker

Nimrod Downstairs
until Sunday 23 March

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director Neil Armfield
designer Bill Haycock
Jodi Farr, Michelle Foxton, Colin Frick,
Max Gillett, Nora Hildebrand, Barry Otto

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from Wednesday 16 April

CLOWNEROOMIES!

director Geoffrey Rush
designer Caroline Jones
Gillian Hydn, Russell Newman, Geoffrey Rush,
Tony Taylor, Pat Thomson

Nimrod Upstairs
from Wednesday 23 April

LEOUDS

Michael Frayn
director Neil Armfield
designer Emma D'Arcy
Paul Bertons, Jennifer Hagan,
John McTernan

Nimrod at York Theatre, Seymour Centre
from Tuesday 8 April

PETER BROOK'S C.I.C.T. COMPANY

14 PERFORMANCES ONLY!

UBU (in French)
Alfred Jarry
director Peter Brook
8, 9, 26, 29 April at 8pm

THE IRK (in English)
based on Colin Turnbull's book
The Mountain People
director Peter Brook
11 April at 8pm,
12 April at 2.30pm and 8pm

THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS (in English)
Distilled by Jean-Claude Carrière after
Farid Ud-Din Attar's 12th century Persian poem
director Peter Brook
16, 17, 18 April at 8pm
19 April at 2.30pm and 8pm

The tour by Peter Brook and C.I.C.T. has been made possible by the generous assistance of the Association Française d'Action Artistique, the Australia Council and by arrangements with the Adelaide Festival of the Arts Inc.

WHISPERS RUMOURS & FACTS



By Norman Kessel

Venerable actress and director **Colleen Clifford**'s highly successful production last year of Goldsmith's *The Shoguns To Conquer* has earned her an Australia Council grant to help in the presentation of a Restoration comedy. Sir John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse, or Fortune In Danger*. First staged at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in 1697, it is now to have a four weeks season at the Cell Block Theatre, opening March 19. Cast includes **Babs McMillan**, **John Warnack**, **John Fitzgerald**, **Frank Garfield** and **Michael Biecher**.

En passant, it seems new play ideas were just as hard to come by all those centuries ago. *The Relapse* was a sequel to and parody of Colley **Clibber**'s first play, *Love's Last Shift* or *The Fool In Fashion*, staged the year before. Then eighty years later Sheridan wrote a more prodish version of Vanbrugh's effort called *A Trip To Scarborough*.

Quotable quips from **Robert Morley**'s Sydney press conference before beginning rehearsals for son **Wilton**'s production of **Alan Bennett**'s *The Old Country* have had extensive exposure, but here's a few you may have missed.

On whether his son robs him of roles: "Age limits you far more than shape."

On his favorite role: "Tevorably the one I am about to do."

On regret: "I have none of any consequence."

On the naming of his sons: "Wilton was not named after the carpet, but after his grandfather, Sheridan after Sheridan Whiteside because he was born on the opening night of *The Man Who Came To Dinner*."

On which of his own plays he liked best: "*Edward Mr. Son*."

On whether he was disappointed by the film version of his "Not at all. The money was lovely. But **Spencer Tracy**, who starred in the movie, came to my dressing room after watching the last night of the stage production and said: 'I'm afraid I've made a cock-up of your play. Nobody told me it was a comedy.'"

I was delighted to be told by **Harold Jones** that at the boarding house he and his wife, Ennoble Theatre general manager **Rosemary Jones**, stayed at in Stafford-on-Avon, each room had, instead of the usual Golden Bible, a volume of Shakespeare's plays. Their landlady, an enthusiastic booster for the Royal Shakespeare Company, was nevertheless a perceptive critic. The production of *The Tempest* they saw was every bit as disappointing as she had told them.

A scoop is a scoop, as any honest scribe will tell you. Like, for instance, Maria Papanova's arful revelation in *The Australian* — two days before Lord Mayor Nelson Mears' official announcement at the Theatre Royal that **Doreen Warburton** and the Q Theatre had won the Sydney Theatre Critics Circle Award for 1979. This was unexpected acknowledgement of the Circle's importance, because naughty Manetta from the stage opposed the National Critics Circle, refused to join it, attacked and ridiculed it on every possible occasion, and gloated when withdrawal of Australian Council funding killed it off. I mean, how sincere can you get?

Regrettably, a member of the Circle must have been indiscreet, but no such leakage marred the announcement of Sydney's other major award, the seventh annual trophy presented by *The Gipsy*, a dinner club of showbiz oriented citizens. Decided by secret ballot, none knew the result till I handed a sealed envelope to guest of honour NIDA director **John Clark**. Runaway winner was **Ron Haddock** for the sustained excellence of his work in *The Club*, *Love To The Devil* and *The Get Game*. He had formidable competition, the other eight nominees being **husband** and wife acting team **Anthony Wharley** and **Olivia Rodell**, entrepreneur **Kenn Brodrenk**, administrator **Elizabeth Butcher**, designer **Larry Eastwood**, the

Nimrod production team for *The Freeman Press*, **The Q Theatre** and **Doreen Warburton**, director **George Whaley**, actress **Kerry Walker** Ron and his wife being in London with the Nimrod production of *The Club*, the trophy was accepted on his behalf by Nimrod publicity manager **Alisa Carpenter**.

Did you know that the "idiot board", today an indispensable piece of equipment in all TV studios, was so named many years ago by the late **John Barrymore** when failing memory forced him during filming to read his lines from a slate held by a prompter off-screen.

A letter from **Alexander Archibald**, founder of the Marian Street (now Community) Theatre, laments the perilous state of British theatre and says he is likely to be back in Australia before the end of the year.

"Besides being American playwrights of acknowledged talent, what do **Sam Shepard**, **Israel Horowitz**, **Lauford Wilson**, **Thomas Babe**, **Ed Bullins**, **Maria Irene Fornes**, **A. R. Gurney** Jr., **Elizabeth Swados**, **Steven Yaskin**, **Christopher Durang**, **Mark Medoff**, **Michael Cristofer** and **Richard Wesley** have in common," asked **Richard Hammer** in a recent issue of *Forum*.

"None of them has written a Broadway hit," he answered.

Substitute "Australian commercial theatre" for "Broadway" and you can equate a formidable list of highly talented local writers: **Hibbard**, **Romeril**, **Burns**, **Hewitt**, **Nowra**, **Peters**, **Blair**, **Kennedy** et al.

None of these writers has had a commercial success, even back in the days when commercial theatre was a livelier proposition. They have made it only in fringe oriented and competent. Even **David Williamson**'s appearances in commercial houses have been in subsidised theatre productions.

Hammer said that for today's theatre intellectuals, popularity and quality are hardly synonymous, despite the fact that in the history of theatre most great plays were written for popular audiences. He added: "Serious" playwrights have always been lery of popular approval. If **Sam Shepard** woke up one morning to discover he'd written a Broadway hit, one feels certain he'd be one gull-ridden playwright.

SPOTLIGHT

Sideshow Alley

By Jill Sykes

It's like one of those excuses for a lottery fill-in-the-blanks to name one of the most exciting female theatrical talents in Australia...R—B—N. Except that there are two answers — Robin Nevin and Robyn Archer. So the prize would have to be a ticket to *Songs From Sideshow Alley* in which they both appear.

This is a late-night show commissioned by the Adelaide Festival. It has been written by Robyn Archer, who considers it a step between cabaret and a more substantial form of theatrical writing, which she is already tackling in the form of a play about Lorenzo de Medici.

For Robin Nevin, a straight actress whose many outstanding performances include the title role in *A Chairs Soul* and *Blanche* in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, it is a chance to use her singing voice. (Don't be fooled when she turns up on TV with a soprano as Nellie Melba. "I've just got used to miming other people's voices and I'm being asked to burst forth with my own.")

Theatre for Sideshow Alley came to Archer at the Intercontinental Hotel in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where she was on tour last year with Jerry Wexley, one of the two musicians involved in the new show. "It was after the gig, about midnight, with the curfew around us and the soldiers parading up and down at the bottom of the hotel. But the elements must have been there for ages."

"What I was looking for was something which would involve more drama than *Kold Comfort Affair*, more actual acting, so there had to be some sort of story. I wanted to write it for Robin — just as *Kold Comfort* evolved because I wanted to work with John Guden — so it was essential to



Robyn Archer

think of some sort of human drama between two women.

"At the same time, I thought it would be interesting to look at two older women. I suppose it is as you get older yourself that you realise the value of talking to older women about their experiences.

"And then the carnival thing. I knew the odd came because Dad was in showbusiness. I remember the wife of an old vaudevillian in Adelaide called Pearl or Tracie or Dollie or something like that. And every time we went down to Glenelg to see the summer carnival, it was always quite a haul for Dad to say hello. She would stand there with her pockets and a bag hanging out of her mouth, a rough old sheldah."

These general ideas sent Archer digging back further, not only into her

own memories, but those of Bob Hudson's wife Kerry and of Jim Sharman, both of whom were born into sideshow alley. She remembered the traumatic childhood experience of finding her local sideshow attractions stripped of their familiar "freaks" — the pigmies and the half-man-half-women — and their steady decline since then. From Kerry and Jim, she built up a background of the alley people's determination to get their children out and educate them for something better, of the camaraderie and of the resentment when someone pulled out the feeling that they were letting down an area of showbusiness that was all too quickly being replaced by public machines.

From these, and anecdotes her mother told her of young women in war time, she has sketched the

characters of Pearl and Tracie, two sideshow alley entertainers in their late fifties. They were at their peak in the 1940s, in the days of ankle socks and candelabra in the dark corners of the alley, and their memories of that time still shape their outlook and appearance in the Adelaide Festival production, directed by Pam Brighton. Archer plays Tracie, who is a bit bitch and sees herself as totally

persecution between them. They talk nostalgically about the past, bursting into song about a dozen times, and despairingly of the future for sideshow alley people. They carry on the reasons for the collapse of their business, pointing accusatory fingers at an anonymous Royal Agricultural Society that could be the one running the Royal Show in any of our capital cities.



Robin Nevin

independent. But in reality, she is less radical and more dependent than Pearl (played by Nevin), who did the normal conventional thing of getting married and having children.

"Tracie is more the semiconscious, signing herself with the men of the show but having none of that admirable female rationale that some of those wonderful women do have. Pearl is actually the red-capper," Archer explains. "Tracie is louder-mouthed, but much more the conservative."

Pearl's decision to leave sideshow alley sets the structure of the entertainment, which is basically a two-hander for the women with imaginary crowds and two real musicians, Jerry Wexley and Louis McManus, who will play a selection of

"The whole bloody show's run by farmers."

"Clean it up, clean it up.

"Clean it up, clean it up.

"Clean up sideshow alley on behalf of the nation.

"The national good don't want no truck with aberrations."

"Get rid of bearded ladies and grizzly foreign races.

"The RAS is from the clean wide open spaces."

Tracie points out the RSA policy changes that first of all disallowed beards and then forced the carriers back off their "boards", the little stages out front where they would attract their audiences by performing a tantalising segment of their show. "Protruding extremities into the path of the public" were no longer allowed.

At the time I talked to Archer and

Nevin, only one of the show's songs had been heard publicly — the "Backyard Abortion Walk". This had been well received with the encouraging comment that it was taking women's issues at a contemporary level, but expressing them in music that sounded as though it was from the fifties. "And it does depend on that a bit, as in making our view on a situation those women wouldn't have a view on."

Archer had put the script away for two months in order to come to it as a performer rather than the author. "I don't know how I would feel about going into a two-hander when the other person had written it. I want Pam Brighton to take it as a director, almost as if I hadn't written the script. I'd like to be as critical of it as I would be of anyone else's work."

They were both looking forward to being directed by a woman for the first time. But would the sex of the director really make a difference?

"I don't know whether it is important or not," says Archer. "But it might turn out to be very interesting. Pam providing the kind of sympathy for the material that a male director wouldn't have."

Nevin expands this view. "That is a problem I have come up against a lot in the theatre: working with men who simply don't have the understanding of the roles that have been written for the women. It can be very difficult. They tend not to trust the actresses, certainly in my experience, that has been the case — and I usually feel very strongly that I know. I just want to show them what I feel about a character, and they then can decide, but they tend to leap in at an early stage of rehearsal and tell you what to do."

The production of *Songs From Sideshow Alley* has been bound down to depend on its people — no fancy sets or elaborate staging effects to go astray. Brian Thomson is providing an all-purpose back-cloth, Anna Senter is finding the costumes, Jamie Lewis is doing the lighting.

Archer looks on herself and Nevin as a vaudeville team getting their act together and she is determined to increase her knowledge of straight acting in the process. "I haven't got time to go to NIDA, though I need to."

Neil Fitzpatrick

Neil Fitzpatrick talks to Ray Stanley

Neil Fitzpatrick, appearing in the Melbourne Theatre Company's production of Pinter's *Betwixt* since last September, would surely qualify for inclusion on any short list of this country's top actors. Despite lack of media exposure (he hates being interviewed), as a regular performer in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, he is better known generally than many whose work is restricted to one city.

Fitzpatrick is an actor whose work always satisfies, it rarely wins in anything less than "quality", who conscientiously builds up each characterisation into something theatrically original (without aid of disguises) and never resorts to mannerisms.

His professional career began in 1956, playing opposite Dulcie Gray in *Too Good To Squash* for the late Garnet H. Carroll. He then resisted another offer from the Carroll management, preferring to remain in Melbourne for some two years, leaving about radio work (an actor's bread and butter in those days).

Next came a part in J.C. Williamson Theatres' production of *Not In The Face* with Edwin Stiles and Sophie Stewart and, apart from a Philip Street revue, Fitzpatrick has not worked in commercial theatre since.

"It's mainly because the commercial theatre became of less importance to the working actor," he says, recalling John Sumner's Union Theatre Repertory Company was employing professional actors and the Trust Players had been formed.

He worked in the fourth season of Sumner's company, joined the Trust Players (he is somewhat peeved some of the obituary notices on the Elizabethan Theatre mentioned the Trust Players' occupancy of it), and also did another stint in 1961-62 with the UTRC. In 1964 he went to England where he worked at the National Theatre.

Returning to the country in 1968, Fitzpatrick has since played mainly with the Old Tote, Nimrod, MTC and State Theatre Company of South

Australia.

It is in contemporary plays rather than the classics that this actor has made his mark and when, despite his playing Parolles in Tyrone Guthrie's production of *All's Well That Ends Well* for the MTC, I pointed out he seemingly had attempted few of the major Shakespearean roles, it was to discover that he was disillusioned in the respect.

He was Horatio to Tim Elmet's *Hamlet* for the Old Tote soon after returning, and says the Science Theatre was a terrible venue. Two years later, as Brutus in *Julius Caesar*,



he found the acoustics of the Sir John Clancy Auditorium far from satisfactory. Topping this came his *Macbeth* in an experimental production of Rex Cramphorn's which, after much energy and soul-searching, was greeted by jeers from school children at performance after performance.

Then John Bell approached him to play Malvolio in his production of *Twelfth Night* for the Nimrod and, because he has a high regard for Bell, Fitzpatrick accepted. His performance was modelled on silent film comic

Buster Keaton; designer Ron Carpenter had come up with a photograph of Keaton, and the role was taken from there.

Fitzpatrick admits he would like to play in Chekhov (he never has). Significantly in his career he was in *Men And Supermen* and *Canada* and then (he did play the middle-aged Peter Glynn in the STCSA production).

He admits to a great satisfaction at appearing in Australian plays.

"In *The Department* it was a revelation to just stand on stage in a play which really didn't appeal to me greatly on the page. To have the challenge of doing a part which I didn't feel suited for, to push myself into a shape I didn't think was me, was wonderful in itself. But then to stand in front of an audience and just feel them open up totally!"

Productions of local plays which have a successful premise in one city, Fitzpatrick feels should be seen by the rest of the country.

"I am so sick and tired of having seen three or four different productions of the same Australian play happening in eighteen months all over Australia. I know economically it works not that way, but to me it's a distortion of the growth of the Australian theatre in toto. That is actors, directors and writers.

Much could be done, Fitzpatrick feels, to have more national interest in the theatre, pointing out that even actors frequently are unaware of what is happening in other cities or what fellow actors are doing.

"Maybe once every two years there could be some sort of grant for a company of absolutely the best available players from each state. They would have to be prepared sometimes to sacrifice their home lives to be part of such a project, to join the top actors in each state in a company for two or three interesting plays, presented in each of the capital cities around Australia for six months. Like opera and ballet as a showcase."

Many people will certainly agree there is a need for such a company. And there is little doubt it would have to include actor Neil Fitzpatrick.

It's Thriving with hair!



By Katherine Brisbane

In contrast to the brooding air of the rehearsal room, the atmosphere in the nearby administrator's office of the Sydney Theatre Company's new premises in Dawling Street, Porti Point, was jovial. It was the lunch break of Simon Gray's *Close of Play*, and we were waiting for Frank Thring. He was in the wardrobe, we were told, and might never come out.

This proved untrue. Quite soon he emerged, in his characteristic black shirt and gold chain.

"What on earth," I asked anxiously, "prompted you to come and play in dreadful Sydney?"

"I thought you'd never ask," he replied. "As one of our national critics you will find it very interesting that this is the first time I have actually been asked to play in Sydney. I've worked here, of course, in productions for J. C. Williamson and Garret Carroll, but these have been touring productions. No one has had enough sense to actually ring me up and say 'Do you want to come and play so and so?' Until now — and of course, I am enchanted to be in at the opening of a new theatre company. Which is why I'm here working for nothing."

"Do you think," said Ruth Cracknell, his fellow actor sitting at his

elbow, "that this is the big break through that some of us here might actually be asked to go to Melbourne?" It's a valid pro quo, you know."

"Have you ever been invited to take part in a Melbourne production?" I asked her.

"Well, right at the beginning of the Union Rep. But, well, no. Not really."

"You'd have noticed?"

"I think I'd have noticed."

"Sense actors in the country don't seem to be given the responsibility for the success or failure of a show that they do in other countries," I remarked. "You don't often see a play mounted as a vehicle for an actor, nor does there seem to be genuine consultation."

Ruth: Yes, you're right about that.

Frank: I disagree completely.

Ruth: A little of the problem is the amount of time you get to rehearse. The directors are busy on other things before they start rehearsal and it all happens so quickly. So you find that either you have a fight or you are persuaded — perhaps a different result might come from consultation. You don't think so?

Frank: No, no no. You know how difficult John Sumner is — but we talk about every aspect of casting, design and so on. And, one is delighted to say, that one has given one's best performance under Sumner's very, very strict direction.

Ruth: Which is why has remained so successful for so long. I think Richard Wharmston is going to give this sort of feeling to the company. I'm quite convinced. But you are right in saying in the past it hasn't happened all that much. In Sydney, anyway.

Frank: It's been happening with me in Melbourne for twenty five years with Sumner, who is, as you know, Queen Evil.

"May I quote you, Frank?" I asked.

"Of course. Haven't you read my preface to that machine book on the MTC by Geoffrey Hutton? Sumner is really a remarkable man."

Frank Thring is one of the rare exceptions in the Australian theatre — an actor who has held his status as star in the workaday world of company life, who during the 50s and 60s when London and Hollywood were still the goals of every actor, managed to hold his place in both cities while preferring to make his home in Melbourne.

I tried to talk to him about his Gurn in the MTC's *The Cherry Orchard* — one of the most touching performances I can remember. "It wasn't to be successful at," he said momentarily contemplative, and then, "And you'll be delighted to hear that I'm wearing the same wig in *Close of Play*. I thought, everybody's bored with the thaven head and if I'm going to sit in the middle of the stage all night, let's have Frank Thring with hair!"

So we talked of the Simon Gray play instead. His role is not that of a villain this time. "In fact I'm absolutely charming, considering I have no dialogue..." He plays the imposing but silent father figure whose presence draws each member of the family in turn into self-consciousness. "It's not an easy play. There's nobody quite sure what it's all about. So consequently we all bring our own vibrant, rehearsal sessions are very argumentative."

I asked Ruth Cracknell what she thought about Simon Gray. She plays the adopted mother of the family.

"Simon Gray is writing something which is terribly, terribly painful, not only in a personal way but in a national. It must be very painful, I think, to be a writer in England now — and Britain is turning out some amazing plays — because it is reflected in their work. Every comedy, black or otherwise, has this edge of pain to it."

"What do you think the play's about?"

"I think," said Ruth, "that it's all about deprivation."

"Oh," said Frank, archly. "Is that what you think?"

"It's all about love and the way it has never been given at the right moment."

"There, you see," said Frank. "Why we fight all the time!"

When we passed the rehearsal room, the director Rodney Fisher and the rest of the cast were huddled in armchairs, brooding again. Fisher has just returned from mounting Gray in London. He did not reveal to me what secrets he had learnt there.



Acting Co's The White Devil

AD FEST

By Director, Christopher Hunt

Theatre dominates the programme of the 1988 Adelaide Festival, a contrast with recent years in which music has tended to dominate festival programme planning.

There are twenty-one new productions, festival's twenty-three days (March 7-29), and that doesn't include seventeen ballets, two operas, a variety of late-night cabarets and many other elements that are at least marginally connected with the theatre.

The programme is deliberately balanced evenly between Australian productions and overseas visiting companies and soloists. Attention has so far, perhaps inevitably, been placed very much on the foreign imports, with the first Australian visit of Peter Brook's Paris-based company in a special highlight. But the balance has been planned to display both sides. The touchstone in choosing which companies to invite from abroad (apart from the fundamental question of availability) has been companies that have performing conditions parallel to those that may be found in Australia, so that the ideas and approaches of each company may have the most direct possible relevance to theatre in Australia today. As with the rest of the festival's programme, a second element has been today to find productions which would be rewarding for those who are professionally involved in theatre in

this country, but not so exciting as to be meaningless to a general audience.

Adelaide drama and youth productions are important in the festival themselves, but the most important events for theatre-goers are likely to be the remainder of the drama programme. On the native side there are new productions from the Melbourne Theatre Company. Alex Rago's new play *Big River*, set on the River Murray at the turn of the century and reflecting specifically the underlying theme of the whole festival, which is setting out to explore through the arts, Aspects of Change and Man's reaction to Change; and the Sydney Theatre Company will present a British musical *I've Gotting My Act Together and Taking It On The Road*. This gritty rock opera, which was one of the unexpected success stories of New York during the past two years, takes place in a cabaret club somewhere in America where the heroine Heather is celebrating her 30th birthday and the final rehearsal for her come-back after years of retirement since her early success as a middle-of-the-road singing star of the 60's. But in the meantime she has become a troubled but determined supporter of Women's Lib and the play portrays what happens during the rehearsal when her former lover and road-manager, who has set up her come-back tour, fears and is appalled by the new songs she proposes to sing.

Two productions are being presented by the Festival itself. Robyn Archer's first full-length show in which she has written songs, lyrics and dialogue. It is a two-woman show which Robyn Archer will perform with Robin Nevin, directed by Pam Brighton. Set in the present against a backdrop of a seedy longroad alley, Nevin and Archer portray two women who have worked opposite each other for forty years.

The second Festival production is the much-discussed Australian premiere of Tom Stoppard and Andre Previn's "play for actors and orchestra" *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*. An example of Stoppard's doubling with *EGDF* also reveals that strong current of social and political protest that runs through all his work, however often it is concealed by the surface pyrotechnics.

For the first time two of Adelaide's alternative theatre companies are included in the official programme of the festival, and both will present new works commissioned for the occasion. Troupe, at the Red Shed, have a new work by David Allen and Doreen Clarke called *Copple and Coppers*, a critical and entertaining look at the origins of commercial theatre in Australia which revolves around the theatrical trope that Coppen, 19th century actor and entrepreneur, bequeathed to JC Williamson; and the Stage Company will present a new

LAIDE FESTIVAL

mounted by Ken Ross with Brian Deburgh directing. *Lorday and his Path* is a portrait of the life and times of Thomas Lindsay. It will open in the new Prince Hall Theatre in the Centre for Performing Arts where the Stage Company is to be resident drama company.

Adelaide's State Theatre Company will, as in the past, present two major new productions in their home, the Playhouse Theatre in the Festival Centre beside the Torrens Lake. Colin George has gone back to the earliest sources of European drama to create a four-hour spectacle based on the Wakefield Mystery Plays, that astonishing cycle of ironies, yet profound dramas that developed out of English medieval traditions of street theatre and continued to be performed through until the disapproval of the Anglican government of Elizabeth I ended the run just 400 years ago.

The State Theatre Company's second production reflects another major aspect of Festival planning: throughout the three weeks there is to be a sequence of productions specially for children, with the Scott Theatre on the campus of Adelaide University given over entirely to young people's performances. The STC as their contribution to this side of the festival is presenting Carlo Gozzi's *King Stag*, updated by Nick Enright. A classic 18th century mixture of Commedia dell'Arte and fairy tale, *King Stag* is

set in the mythical land of Serendip, and will be designed by Richard Roberts with Tony Strachan and Edwin Hodgson joining members of the Magic Company in both school matinee and evening family performances.

In the Scott Theatre the young people's programme runs for the full three weeks of the festival, opening with the Australian premiere of Peter Maxwell Davies' opera *The Two Fiddlers* which Davies wrote in 1978 for performances entirely by children, both on stage and in the pit. It is directed by Helmut Bakula of St Mawson's Youth Arts Centre in Melbourne, and the production designer is self-styled former whorled Nigel Tufillier.

The Scott's second week offers what is probably the first visit ever to Australia by an adult theatre company specialising solely in performances for young people, the Finnish company Theatre des Jeunes Auteurs, with a fabic *The Lions of Sand* (*Les Lions de Sable*) that explores through the formalised manners of Grand-Gaillard the way in which children are conditioned in early life to accept the traditional role-playing of Breadwinner-Father and Housewife-mother, and yet manages to be humorous while conveying its didactic content.

The last week in the Scott presents two Australian plays, both given by

the Melbourne St Mawson's Youth Arts Centre company; Michael Mischner directs *Zig and Zag Father*, a show for small children based on the television characters of the late Zig and Helmut Bakula directs Coen's *Mixed*, a winner of the recent Goethe Institute play competition, which explores for teenage audiences the problems of boredom in suburbia in Australia (or any other urban environment for that matter) when fantasy can all too dangerously turn into attempted reality as teenagers seek for imagined thrills to eleven dead weekends.

Finally, on the Australian side, there is a new show from Patrick Cook and the Marionette Theatre of Australia directed by Richard Bradshaw. *Captain Lazar and his Darkhounds' Cove* is a savagely funny political satire that is quite definitely not the children-love-puppets kind of theatre with which marionette theatre is too often confused.

So to the serious content, headed most obviously by the first Australian visit of Peter Brook's Paris-based company, the Centre for International Research Brook needs no introduction to serious theatre-goers to whom he has been an all-too-undiminished legend for the past twenty years. But it is surprising perhaps that the vast majority of the public know little about this pivotal figure in twentieth century theatre, and the chance to see three of his



Brook's *Cuckoo in the Birds*

recent productions (in Adelaide they play in a deserted quarry, typical of Brook's determination to get away from conventional theatre surroundings and reactions). The CBCT will present Brook's version of *Ubu*, a compilation from the first two of the *Ubu* trilogy, this will be given in French with a liberal sprinkling of English that should give non-French speaking audiences all the clues they need to follow the ludicrous antics of Poor Ubu. Their second production, *The R*, justly celebrated in theatre festivals, should (like the first production) have an overwhelming impact in the starkly beautiful surroundings of the quarry. Based on Colin Turnbull's book *The Mountain People*, *The R* concerns the total disintegration of an African tribe who have been denied their traditional existence as hunters and left to starve. It is a lightning parable for our times.

Finally, Brook brings his most recent production, that is also in some senses his oldest, since it is a theme that has both guided his search for theatrical reality for a generation and stands as a metaphor for his work, and indeed all Mandelstam's search for Truth. *The Conference of the Birds*, which was premiered at the 1979 Avignon Festival, depicts with wondrous beauty and power an epic and hazardous journey undertaken by a congress of birds whose flight symbolises the obstacles that beset the human soul in its unending search for ultimate truth. The tale and origin of the poem stems from the epic poem of the 12th century Persian mystic Farid

Uddin Attar.

If Brook's three productions are seen to steal much of the theatrical thunder of the festival, the other overseas productions are in fact no less interesting. The nearest of them to more-or-less conventional theatre is the Acting Company of New York, now the resident dramatic troupe at the new theatre in the Kennedy Centre in Washington DC. Founded by John Houseman, the Acting Company is the only permanent touring repertory company in the United States, and has been the breeding ground for numerous distinguished theatre figures in the States. Mainly drawn from former students of the Juilliard School of Drama, the company will give two productions in Adelaide as part of their Australian tour. One of these, a horrifying modern-dress, park-onated version of Webster's violent drama *The White Devil*, will be seen only in Adelaide. Directed by Michael Kahn, it is sure to cause one of the Festival's customary outbursts from the conservative elements of the city's population, though the relevance of its sceptic view of society is of course made all the more pointed by transferring its time to the present without, however, altering a word of the original text. The second Acting Company production will be by Romanian director Liviu Ciulea, who is remembered in Australia for his one previous production here, a notable *Love or Death* in Sydney in 1977. He has chosen a superb vehicle for his own special brand of theatrical subversiveness, Paul Fosse's satirical drama *Elisabeth I*, in which numerous scenes hover between reality and imagination as a troupe of elegant actors prepare to present a play about Elizabeth.

The two remaining festival offerings from overseas are both closely linked to the most recent developments in theatre both in Europe and the USA. From New York comes Mabou Mines, perhaps the most extraordinary of all the off-off-Broadway companies. Their production of *Shaved Like An Egg*, based on the writings of Celine, reflects both the company's origins as a visual art performance troupe, and their interest in getting away from all conventional theatrical habits. A playfully happening which contains rigidly formal, surrealised movements

and images with a plainly naturalistic text, *Egg* parallels the conflict within Celine's own writings of feminist intellect and feminisation. With a specially composed score by Philip Glass, and props and costumes designed by several of New York's most significant younger artists, *Egg* has won accolades from all the critics in New York. Among the principals of this tightly-cooperative company is English expatriate actor David Warfield, a noted exponent of Beckett's drama and for whom Beckett has recently written a new piece, *Monoogue*, which Warfield premiered in New York at the very end of 1979.

Paralleling Mabou Mines from Europe comes the Catalan company of La Claca (*The Claque*) with a unique event called *Mori of Merina*, roughly translated as "Death to the Bogeyman". La Claca is a young puppet and mime company based on the traditions of Catalan street theatre and *Mori of Merina*, which is a loosely based version of *Ubu Roi* (given by Brook in the Festival) reveals these origins in its wordless (but not silent) pantomime puns of anti-faction. The special interest that attaches to the production is that the great Spanish painter Joan Miró designed and painted himself all the mime and wonderful figures in or out of which the actors appear on the stage. Like a grotesque Miró painting come to life, the performance is a force denunciation of Dictatorship, and was the first such piece to play in Spain after Franco's death.

So from medieval street theatre one comes full circle to Brook and La Claca. Each play or event makes some kind of comment on change, either through contrasting youth and age or through the force of revolution. It is not necessary to see or make the underlying thematic links, but they are there to be found if one wants, in a programme that acts out overall to cover the best representative examples of theatre today in Australia and within the American-European tradition, wherever it seemed to me to have most probably relevance to the possible forms of dramatic enterprise in the next decade. It is a programme that deliberately looks back at the past while perhaps pointing a way forward for theatre in the '80s.

WRITERS' VIEW

TOM KENEALLY



*This is your first play since 1972 when *Bush* was revived in the theatre in 1982?*

The very serious prospect of trying to write a good play. Novelists don't have a very good record as playwrights to say the least. There are a few exceptions: there is Patrick White, there is Geoffrey Blainey, yet in both cases the man's novels are more successful than their plays and the novels are what they are likely to be remembered for. This is no accident because an entirely different discipline operates with the novel than operates in writing for the theatre.

Since 1972 and *An Awful Rose* I've been promising myself that I would make another attempt at writing a play, but it's hard enough getting a novel written within a year. I suppose I was more cynical of the novel form both in terms of its artistic and financial rewards than I was of the theatre. And since 1972 the intense impact of David Williamson has occurred in the cinema, in fact *An Awful Rose* opened at

John Street with his *Don't Purr*. I've always admired Williamson's work for its sure wit, for the way it engages an audience, returns it gives Australians both culturally and as entertainment, but I can't write like Williamson. I even felt that Williamson's style of writing took audiences into a different dimension than I was working in.

The fact that a new play called *Belle's Master* is appearing in 1982 is, like most of these things contingent and accidental. About eighteen months ago I read of an accident in the Northern Territory where some aborigines decided to create a rapprochement between black and white by bringing forth certain secret objects called Rangs. The Rangs had never willingly been shown to white men and no woman had seen them since the Dreaming without being subject to death penalties. In case this proposition sounds fantastic and objectionable one only has to remember that as late as 1978, in the Williams case in

SA, a white aborigine was acquitted of a charge of murdering his wife on the grounds that he killed her in the excitement that she was about to divulge tribal secrets.

The name of the central character in the play is Belle and her house, which has been blown away by a fresh wind, is of course a handy symbol for the instability of the relationship between the two races. Belle believes he will not be able to rebuild until he brings forth the Rangs and displays them to the whites. He believes that the technological inequality between whites and blacks is due entirely to the fact that the whites are keeping their Rangs from him, as certainly as he is keeping his from them. After intense soul-searching he brings them forth expecting an overwhelming response from white society. In fact he gets nothing and these precious objects become, as demythologues of that the women of the settlement end up using them as clothes drying poles. His fellow elders turn on him

and one of them murder him because he has so suddenly given away the last remaining sacred possessions of his people.

To return to the question of 1982, in the middle of last year I called Ken Hurrell and told him that I had dreamed up this story based on incidents that are recorded by the anthropologist R. M. Berndt in a monograph called "An Adjustment Movement in Arnhem Land". I asked him if there was any particular note that it would be most convenient for the Nimrod to receive a script like that and he told me that there was a space available in February 1982. The play was therefore written to miss that deadline, that had no effect, however, on the ultimate quality or otherwise of the play, but it created problems for Ken Hurrell, the director

new stands is immensely better than he and I watched on my monitor's central monitor before I ever saw it read, or heard it acted, by black and white actors.

You spoke earlier of the dream that the *Australians driving had taken over Williamson* and that you could not recall one in that direction. Could you expand on that?

You did very much like to be able to work like Williamson. I can remember the impact of *Days, Ferry*, the touching gratitude of the audience on having themselves identified on stage. Something of a new experience for Australians. It happened with *The God*, but *The God* was still sort of Henry Lawson territory, and it was about men from the bush who were slightly larger than the suburban variety. Larger and more respectful, whereas Williamson's people are identifiably the Australian middle class, who are the people that attend the plays. I can still remember the thrill of identification that the people had so recently ago in 1972 when Williamson's work made its largest impact in Sydney. A number of annotations of Williamson have since taken the Australian drama into the direction of a number of little social vignettes with quick situations and quick pay off here and that's the sort of play that not only I cannot write, but I do not want to write either.

Words are important to me, not just as an embellishment to make an audience laugh. I've heard talented young men in the Nimrod bar speak of drama as if you have to make a choice between actions and words. As if the pure form of play is one in which there is only action. Might I say I think this is not only naive, but even old fashioned. You cannot speak of words as if they were not human actions. It is a dangerous proposition that young playwrights seem to have picked up, probably from teachers who should know better, that there is a tension in a play, in fact something like a battle between words and action. I think words are among the best of human actions and I see no conflict.

I do recognise the problem in earlier drafts of *Babe's House* that the words are too expansive, too little supported by the action, but I hope as I speak to you here the day before the play opens, that by now the words of the play are adequately and dramatically supported by what actually happens in the play.

Do you have plans for further plays?

Yes. I would certainly like to attempt a comedy. This afternoon I am taking off to America where, amongst other things I am preparing a workshop which will lead to a production later this year based on my novel *Paragon*. *Paragon* is the journal of an unborn child. It's rather a whimsical and crazy novel and I'm delighted that the people at the Mark Taper Theatre in Los

Angeles can live to a quality. They want to make it a musical.

The problem of the central character, at least the narrator, being unborn is not a great one. Before they wrote to me I had already been tempted to write it as a play and I think that the unborn child could be a life, adult actor sitting in a capsule above the action, commenting, interestingly perhaps, and also singing songs about his parents, about the extra-terrestrial world. Well, that is something that I would dearly like to turn into a decent play. If of course the Mark Taper people do it and it is successful then I hope it would get an Australian production.

There are other projects in mind as well, but a novelist has to be careful approaching theatre, not only because



Barbara Williams

When a novelist has done to write a play the temptation is for him to do it in the way he writes novels — as to be both a little woolly and to romanticise the action. It's taking place on a monster made his brain. The problem is that because of the different disciplines I spoke of earlier, the novelist's monster is a different sort of occurrence to the playwright's and when the play went into rehearsal I learned as much as quickly from seeing it fleshed out in the most elementary way, that I realised it was necessary to re-write it instantly.

For the first two weeks of the rehearsal re-write — rehearsal and by rehearsal re-write — just getting it ready in time to meet rehearsal schedules. I think the play as a



Michael Barrett

the monster in his brain is a little different, but also because he must be careful that he gets the play adequate time and attention. Most novelists tend to look on a play as a sort of may move, a novel with the purple prose cut out and only the dialogue left in. It's a dangerous proposition with which to begin the writing of a play, but it's the sort of proposition under which I probably wrote *Williamson* and *Days and Ferry*.

If *Babe's House* is better than mine of those other plays then it will be because *Babe's House* was written as a play on its own right. It was given the attention a play should get. It was not treated as a poorer sibling of the novel.

INTERNATIONAL

The presence of modern Britain

By Irving Wardle

Should news of the Hull Truck Company not yet have spread round the globe, I should explain that this is an outfit set up in 1971 by Mike Bradwell to specialise in a genre then new to Britain, the improvised play.

The products like *Bradgers Home* which rapidly got Hull on the national theatre map, have nothing in common with commercial theatre improvisation. In fact they are a complete reversal of the commercial procedure of working out a scenario to exhibit a group of stock characters.

Bradwell's method is to ask each member of his company to privately decide on a character and develop a personality, in minute detail, and only then to bring the company together and set about devising dramatic circumstances to accommodate whatever random figures the actors happen to have created.

Besides this line of work, the company have also begun making one-act plays, shows, and it so happens that both sides of the Bradwell operation have lately been active at its regular London base, the Bush, an extremely well-run pub theatre in Shepherd's Bush.

Wifred, a signed piece by the novelist Peter Tinniswood, tells the sad story of Shirley and William, an unmarried couple who have acquired a pseudo relationship by depending upon their drinking relationship. Wifred, one day, promptly declines his opinion of this phibic scheme by depositing raised cash throughout the flat and going on to suggest the Christmas party leaving the assembled family dining on dried-beef hash. For the first twenty minutes, I mistook this for basic British farce, then, seeing a scene on the common where William throws a stick for Wifred who darts in, whereupon his master recognises him as a kindred being. Why the after snort? Why get married? Why pretend to care for people? Man and dog are two of a kind.

Commented by Bradwell, the play makes extraordinary use of stage invisibility, most obviously in the case of Wifred himself who dominates an evening in which he only appears for thirty seconds

at the end. But not only Wifred is invisible, so is one of the Christmas guests, and so are even the visible characters when they have no active role. This is the first stage play I have seen that exploits the advantages of radio drama by leaving things that can be better imagined for the spectator to fill in for himself. And Bradwell's directorial trade-mark seems to be the performers (especially Philip Jackson's Harry, starring Hellman) which begin as hard-edged caricatures and develop into fully-detailed realistic portraits.

In *Cluck La La!*, devised by Bradwell with the company, you see this quality stretched to the full by improvisation. As usual, the piece offers a fractured narrative with several groups of characters orbiting around a central theme. And, as usual, there is an expanded locale, this time a Northern university town where the action shifts between various, agreed themes like sport, technology, academics and a folk club, as well as their intellectual and personal lives of the community. The narrative is more parallel. There are three main groups: a middle-aged scholar visited by his maritally discontented daughter, a schoolmaster whose wife is the point of beauty, and two working-class students whose friendship breaks up when the boy makes a pass. But the most dramatic agent is Martin (Stephen Warbrick), a young political science lecturer who brings the same coolly detached manner to outlining the decisions of the revolutionary French Fall as to bedding the teacher's wife and the Dorset girl student.

Most of these people have some kind of Gothic background as a refuge from British society, and it would be hard to make too much of this (or the anti-rationality, as it is) the company's method to develop a language of brutal individual scenes in the hope that they will gravitate towards a moral centre. We get closest to such a centre when the Glaswegian student erupts into an enraged tirade on Anglo-Scottish history only to run into Martin's academic stone-wall. Some for some these sketches of social and intellectual confusion show a deadly familiarity with the grooves of provincial academia, and are played with an extraordinary capacity for changing social stereotypes with an intensely personal sub-text. It is a long time since I felt the presence of modern Britain so strongly from a British stage.

Otherwise the New Year has brought in the latest Ayckbourn in the shape of a studio musical, *Sabersham Savers*, (Scarborough), in which the latest Ayckbourn trick is to equip his theatre in

the round with a concrete double revolve, and Howard Barker's *The Love of a Good Man*, a long raspberry at the expense of the Pausanidean obsequy, which fell flat at the Royal Court after collecting admiring opinions in the provinces. But the most cheering discovery so far is that of Hans Kuryshki, a first generation Anglo-Pakistani author, whose *The King And Me* (Soho Play) shows an Elton-obsessed wife going bonkers in a Council flat, and shows a powerful young talent going straight for the target and hitting it with a bang.

Hellman, Pinter And Babe

By Karl Lavett

New York is currently offering a trio of prizefighting playwrights: Lillian Hellman, a champion of seasons past, Harold Pinter, a present powerhouse, and Thomas Babe, a contender for future honours. The current co-existence of this trio on Broadway and Off provides an opportunity for an interesting comparison of changing styles.

Lillian Hellman has been the most sighted watchdog of her own plays, any production requiring her personal approval. So a Hellman play such as the 1941 *Watch On The Rhine* is something of an event.

The Long Wharf Theatre of New Haven, Connecticut, under the direction of Arvin Brown, is considered one of the best of America's regional theatres. The Long Wharf has proved a faithful source for Broadway and several of its productions have transferred to Broadway with great success, notably David Rabe's *Sweaters*, David Storey's *The Changing Room* and a revival of O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness!* Mr Hellman obviously approves of Long Wharf as *Watch On The Rhine* is the second Hellman play the group has produced, the first being the seldom-seen *The Ascent* (Garden in 1976).

Watch On The Rhine opened in 1941 as a strong anti-Nazi statement and a demand for American intervention in World War II. It is melodramatic, it is didactic, and yet the experience is surprisingly effective. The Long Wharf production is acceptable, but

ATIONAL



DANCE



By William Shourbridge

Modern dance in Australia

If there is one thing more encouraging to me than the increased performances of modern dance in this country and the attention and serious distinction that the myopic and slow off the mark press are at long last giving it, it lies in the fact that the growing audiences are gradually arriving

at an understanding of the lexicon and language of dance (both classic and modern) that its values and methods are different from those of ordinary theatre and opera and as such dance cannot be seen and judged on the same terms or with the same expectations as the other art forms.

It is obvious that audiences have got to go further than this (and even more evident that certain "critics" and media commentators need to mature it), but a beginning has at long last been made.

Modern dance performances on a continuing basis haven't been around in Australia for very long. 1965, the year that Elizabeth Claxton and Suzanne Mundy founded the progenies of companies in Adelaide and Sydney respectively, can, for argument's sake, be said to be the birthdate of "Australian" modern dance.

The Queensland, West Australian and Australian Ballets (and the now defunct Ballet Victoria) did from time to time include a "modern technique" piece in their repertoires, but before 1965 there was no company totally given over to exploring modern dance styles in this country.

While we thank, and remember all those people who fought for years to get the style and manner accepted here, the achievement and our most strides within

the last three years are a complete vindication of their efforts even if they no longer play an active part.

Dance in Australia, perhaps more than any other performing art form has come into its own in the last five years or so.

That, of course, is no doubt due to the watchfulness and concern of the Artistic Directors (both past and present) of the Queensland and West Australian Ballet but more so to the careful planning, intelligence and inventiveness of Graeme Murphy and Jonathan Taylor, directors of the Sydney Dance Company and the Australian Dance Theatre respectively.

At a time when the Australian Ballet has lost any real claim to be doing something for contemporary dance in Australia and has lapsed into a 55 million "operation" expending its "product", it is these two companies that are getting the real notice and attention of the media and the young (and in the long run more secure) audiences.

It is with these companies (small as they are) that the real future of dance in Australia lies. Not pomp and ceremony, don't really matter at all in these things.

The Australian Ballet remains a "classics" museum (or a constant repository of nostalgia, let the important business of creation be left to the ADT) and



The Beach Tread from *Winters II*. Photo: Bruce Gane

SDC, while not of course forgetting the West Australian and Queensland companies since they are becoming quite daring in programming these days considering the lack of finance, conservatism and their tough touring schedule.

Here, to draw a comparison between the scene here in Australia and that in both West and East Berlin is irrelevant. Nothing constructive will come of stand-and-gape, as it can hardly be done. The only vague similarity between the two countries could perhaps be in the fact that for years neither country showed any great interest in home-grown choreographic creations, the Germans preferring opera and the Australians... well I don't know what.

That of course has changed dramatically in the last fifteen years. Audiences for all the arts are at an all time high now in Australia and the dance scene in the two Germanies is the healthiest it has ever been.

But in the field of dance Germany did have individuals almost right from the start of the century constantly working and experimenting and performing. Erich Balchrose and Kurt Jooss are just two of the famous names from that country. Australia, apart from certain teachers like Joanne Priest in Adelaide, had no one who was even acquainted with what was happening in the modern fields of dance overseas, and therefore it in and scores were kept in the dark.

While it is in some ways surprising that the SDC and ADT are getting such a strong following now, it is even more surprising that they exist at all given the wilderness from which they have sprung.

The genuine influence on dance in Australia, as it is in most parts of the Western world, would have to be the pioneers and experimenters of America, and especially New York. Ever since the 1890s, when New Yorkers had finally accepted the work of Doris Humphrey, Ted Shawn, Martha Graham and Balanchine's "factual language" such as the NY City Ballet, that city has been the world centre of modern dance. The names that have piled up since the post-war improvisers Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp, Meredith Monk, Robert Wilson and further onwards of avant garde pioneers.

Europe has witnessed the rise of Ballet Rambert, London Contemporary Dance Theatre, Nederlands Dans Theater and the Wuppertal Dance Theatre among others.

Australia, because of distance and expense has had little chance to see any of these companies at first hand and the style of dance they perform. What it has had is that style as translated and incorporated by its own choreographers.

In some ways this is poor because audiences should be exposed to the typical



German Maja Schlegel and Trish Dance Company. Photo: Bruce Baker

ensemble tradition that surrounds the term, to see the way that it made a break with the conventions and attitudes of the classic dance and grew into a whole different manner and type of movement. On the other hand what audiences are now getting is a unique version of that dance style, something that has its roots in this country and cannot be said to be an import.

Numerous critics from overseas have remarked that the dance scene here is amazingly strong when one takes the overall population into account.

The last great of Australia all in some time are exposed to dance. The ADT especially has one of the most thorough and expensive country touring schedules

of any performing art company in this country.

Every state has a professional dance company of some description and Sydney has in addition to the five month Australian Ballet season and the resident SDC, at least two fringe groups that regularly put on performances attended by ever enlarging audiences.

Name of these companies or choreographers is working in a vacuum however, they all have certain backgrounds from here and overseas (in touring or otherwise).

Jonathan Taylor, while his background is that of Ballet Rambert, has been consistently attempting to understand the Australian feel of mood and attitude in some

of his works, *Incident At Bull Creek* and *The Wedding* for example.

Graeme Murphy is adamant that he and his company create something for Australian audiences, reflecting them as well as his own personality. Murphy's *Reveries* was a fascinating and lively chamber work about Sydney life, portrayed in a series of telling vignettes. Poppo was a dance theatre "evening" on Jean Cocteau that gave a new sophistication and intelligence to Murphy's company.

There are Australian works because they were created in Australia and, in the case of the latter two, created by Australians. None of them are Australian by virtue of patriotic attitude or parochial tub-thumping, audiences have accepted and enjoyed in that, illustrating again the expanded aesthetic that has at last gained ground.

Music and dance are probably the two performing art forms that cannot be really bound by national borders, even if, in the case of dance, it may try to analyse the pocket marked face and interior mind of its country of origin. Australian modern dance realises that its creations are to be placed alongside the works of anything from overseas and judged accordingly. What they say and how well they say it is dependent entirely on their choreographers.

There is not yet a distinctive "Australian" choreography, there is Graeme Murphy's style or Jonathan Taylor's style, or wherever else they arise, and one must also be wary of pinning them

down too strongly since every creation is liable to make a volte-face and disrupt expectations — it keeps them and their audiences happily aware.

There has been talk lately of completely changing the dance set-up in Australia. Meritless craze of signing the SDC with the Australian Opera and the Australian Ballet with the Victorian Opera, so that all four companies can have access to both art forms as well as a resident orchestra. This may sound promising, SDC performances would be wonderful in the Opera Theatre backed by an orchestra and all the set costume construction facilities at its command. But there is a danger always (as we have already seen) of boards pulling their teeth at their artists, decisions.

I'm sure that Graeme Murphy and his board would not wish to be enveloped by the Australian Opera board, with the possibility that they might be treated merely as an adjunct and their resources (including their Federal and State funding) exploited. No, the SDC board is far too forward looking for that. They, almost alone in boards of management of the lyric arts in Australia, are fully supportive of whatever Murphy and his fellow choreographers want to attempt.

It is for this reason that the SDC is now government in Australia. Even more than the ADT, the SDC is adventurous. At one with Graeme Murphy it is at least willing to put itself on the line and risk failure.

People said that any attempt at a full length ballet (in modern style), especially when dealing with someone so unfamiliar

as Jean Cocteau, would be a failure and the company would be on the brink of disaster. That has not proved to be the case of anything Poppo has brought the company greater critics and larger audiences and the same goes for the trilogy, *Waxwax*.

That again was a complete breakthrough into new territory and above and woolly as it is in places, can take its place as something by which Sydney people (and by allusion, Australians in general) can see themselves reflected. This year, Murphy will be trying again something different in tackling a heavy work of ballet legend that has been the downfall of more than one choreographer in its time: Ravel's ballet *Daphnis and Chloe*.

The ADT on the other hand is dealing with a huge potential audience, by virtue of serving both South Australia and Victoria. What's more, it is getting those audiences in, especially in the country areas. With a young and well trained company of enthusiastic dancers, the possibilities for improvement and expansion are almost limitless.

This year the ADT will be featuring at the Edinburgh Festival (probably taking *Waxwax* and a triple bill programme) and thence probably on to a regional tour of Britain.

The only other Australian company to appear there has been the Australian Ballet years ago and it was their appearance there that put them on the world arts map. The same will undoubtedly happen to the ADT. Let us hope that before long the SDC will appear there too.



SDC's Poppo Act 1 Photo: Robert Morrison

BERLIN

Komische Oper

BALLET

After centuries in opera and dance at the Berlin Komische Oper have become legendary over the past thirty years. Scarcely limitless supplies of time and money have poured into the company since its foundation in 1947 in order to achieve a perfection of ensemble performance, of visual and technical effects, and perhaps above all a depth of artistic integrity and imagination rarely seen on a stage elsewhere.

The one in which the Berlin Komische Oper is



held has been compounded over the years by the consistent refusal of both the opera and dance companies resident there to perform outside their own home. It has become a place of pilgrimage for all those deeply involved in the performing arts. But now, in a major coup, AGC Australian Guarantees and David Frost, have joined with the Adelaide Festival whose initiative has persuaded the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet to undertake their first tour outside of Europe, a tour of Australia.



The Komische Oper was set up in 1947 by Walter Felsenstein, one of the greatest stage directors of the 20th century. His scars for taking on the job were rough and demanding. Yet the government of the German Democratic Republic, whose support of the arts currently stands at about four times the level of that in Australia on a per capita basis, gave him all the time and money he demanded, and more. In the late 1960s, the Government built a new home for the Komische Oper exactly to Felsenstein's specifications. It is one of the most technically advanced theatres in the world.

So equipped, Felsenstein built up his dream of theatrical perfection. Months of rehearsal were used to perfect every smallest detail and implication of every dramatic situation on stage, whether in opera or dance. Sir Rudolf Bing, when general manager of New York's Metropolitan Opera, told of one of his visits to the Komische Oper when he witnessed a staggering performance of Verdi's *Otello*. Yet Felsenstein became furious from the moment the curtain went up. It turned out that for the opening storm scene alone, Felsenstein had been rehearsing the chorus for weeks, out at a local astronomical factory before a wind tunnel blowing a force 12 gale. Now, armed Felsenstein, here they were staggering around the stage as if only a force 8 gale was blowing. He was not only a perfectionist, but an absolute ruler as well.

The Berlin Komische Oper Ballet was established in 1949. It was set up under the artistic direction of choreographer, Tom Schilling. But like everything else at the theatre it came under the perfectionist dictates of Felsenstein that dance, like opera, must be good theatre, dramatically and visually convincing in every detail. Felsenstein himself finally died at the age of 74 in 1975 at his home in West Berlin, for like those of time and money, Felsenstein's artistic outlook refused to recognise political barriers too, not least the Berlin Wall. But the Komische Oper, one of the most remarkable theatrical organisations in the world, remains a living

monument to one of the most remarkable men of theatre.

Tom Schilling, born in 1928, started life as a dancer, moving into choreography whilst at Weimar in the 1950s, becoming artistic director and chief choreographer for the ballet company at the Dresden State Opera in 1965. Moving to the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet in 1968 he has since created some thirty works for the company.

One programme to be offered on the forthcoming Australian tour includes samples of some of the best of Schilling's shorter works over these fruitful years. The only other choreographer represented in the programme will be John Cranko with *Jeu de Cartes*.

Cranko, the founder, inspiration and director of the Stuttgart Ballet until his untimely death in 1973 was one of the few outside choreographers to be invited to work in the rather hallowed halls of the Berlin Komische Oper. Those who remember the sensational and revelatory visit to Australia of the Stuttgart Ballet in 1974 may grasp from this collection some sort of idea of the style, the theatrical integrity and the quality of performance which the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet will be bringing to Australia in 1980.

Swan Lake, Schilling's latest full-length creation for his company, premiered in Berlin on March 12, 1978 is, however, liable to be the most sensational and revelatory offering of the forthcoming tour.

Not another *Swan Lake*? And despite the seven complete versions of the work seen in Australia, the answer is no, not another *Swan Lake*, but the first realisation of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* ever presented here.

Tom Schilling, in association with the general manager of the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet, returned to Tchaikovsky's original score, and explored his letters and diaries to discover his original dramatic intentions to present *Swan Lake* as it was meant to be. Now less than two years after its Berlin premiere Australia will have the opportunity to see this brilliant, profoundly moving, and faithful version of *Swan Lake*.

Its "new look" is not just in the choreography and dramatic reshaping but also in the splendid designs of Eleonore Kläber. There is not a classical tutu to be seen, instead the swans are clothed in beautiful flowing chifferli costumes which contrast with the stunning magnificence of the court costumes.

So the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet are bringing two great programmes to Australia. One, the complete *Swan Lake*, the other a programme of four complete one-act ballets featuring John Cranko's *Jeu de Cartes* together with three Tom Schilling ballets - *Yorck Symphony* (Mozart), *Evening Dances* (Schubert) and *La Mer* (Debussy).

This tour, involving an investment of \$2 million, is visiting four Australian cities - Melbourne, Adelaide, Canberra and Sydney. The entire company of sixty dancers has come to Australia, and are being accompanied by Australian orchestras of at least fifty two musicians conducted by the company's musical director Lothar Seylanh.



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NOT ANOTHER SWAN LAKE!

Background to the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet's production of *Swan Lake*

The seven different productions of the work we have seen in Australia have not had much to do with the *Swan Lake* which Tchaikovsky created over the years 1875-76. Rather do they derive from the version

staged in St Petersburg in 1895 in memory of the composer who had died in 1893. Compared with Tchaikovsky's original concept, that version of 1895, contrived by the lackies of the court theatre to suit the Russian tastes of the day is hardly recognisable as the same work. The composer's own brother Modest, was brought in to alter the story line, while a hack composer Riccardo Drigo, butchered the score accordingly.

What Tchaikovsky had done in 1875-76 was rebel against the concept of ballet as a mere court entertainment. In his music he revolutionised dance, lifting it onto a new level of dramatic intensity with a score which treated its subject on a fully integrated symphonic basis. The music might seem approachable enough today, but at the premiere at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre in 1877, the orchestra rebelled and even those who could play, the music which Tchaikovsky had composed were reluctant to do so. Choreography, design and dancing were all at an equally incompetent level. The *Swan Lake* of 1877 was a disaster.

That disaster was no doubt in mind when the court theatre in St Petersburg set about reviving the work in 1895. Drigo in particular wrought havoc with the score. He made a start by hacking out no less than 822 bars, about a third of the music Tchaikovsky had composed. He then shuffled the remnants around, rearranged, recomposed, even added a few little numbers of his own. It was the fine choreography of Petipa and Ivanov which has carried *Swan Lake* through to modern times as the very epitome of classical ballet. But it is a *Swan Lake* which has little to do with Tchaikovsky's intentions.

Tom Schilling, in collaboration with the Berlin Komische Oper Ballet's general manager, Dr Bernd Kollinger, returned to Tchaikovsky's original score, first published in Moscow as recently as 1957. They explored his profile writings in letters and diaries to discover the composer's original dramatic intentions. And they explored Tchaikovsky himself, one of the most

autobiographical of composers, to discover his state of mind at the time of composition. The rediscovery of *Swan Lake* turned out to be a long and difficult business.

It, in the past, it has been seen to involve vaguely around the rather enigmatic figure of Swan Woman, Odette. Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* now emerges with the prince Siegfried firmly established at the centre of the drama. It is a drama, explains Schilling, not only about a man at odds with society, but one embroiled against his will in power politics. Siegfried is an outsider, a man who is not "as he is supposed to be" who is not "as they all are". On this level says Schilling, Tchaikovsky's own personal experiences, his own schism with society played a big part. But the central dramatic theme of the work, as Schilling now sees it is something else again. That theme involves "the manipulation and use of power - power to force humans either to submit or be destroyed. Both are possible and both are still happening in this world".

Swan Lake as composed by Tchaikovsky is a tragic ballet. The frivolous divertissements imposed upon it in 1895 here, in the new Schilling, Kollinger version, been removed. From the moment the curtain rises on the first act, audiences will be aware that they are about to see something new and different.

Restless and rebellious, Siegfried is seen from the start as a young idealist striving for a life of love, honesty and fulfilment in a decadent, soulless court.

His mother, normally seen as an aristocratic figure, vaguely gesturing from her throne, here takes on a far more active dancing role in the conflict with her son as she attempts to force Siegfried to accept his responsibilities, and conform.

She is aided and abetted by the so-called mephisto, Rothbart. In the traditional version of *Swan Lake*, Rothbart is another rather vague figure, flitting around the third and fourth acts of the ballet doing beastly things to swan-maidens in general. But here he is restored to his proper role, a dual role of malignant power not only in the realms of nature where he dominates the swan-maidens, but as court too where he dominates Siegfried's mother, and is attempting to dominate Siegfried.

In the first Act, audiences were also introduced to Odile, the so-called "black swan" seen normally amongst the divertissements of the third Act, one of Drigo's more blatant pieces of disregard for Tchaikovsky's intentions. But now she has been reinstated and is introduced from the start as a court dancer, Rothbart's chief tool in his concerted attack on Siegfried. Odile, as Kollinger points out, "represents art and artists who willingly work for a criminal political system".

It is whilst in this situation of conflict and confusion that Siegfried meets up with the swan-woman, Odette. She represents, in Siegfried's mind, not only an epitome of nature (the alternative to the world of vice, decadence conformity at court) but the representation of his longing for freedom. The challenge of breaking the power which Rothbart wields over Odette puts meaning and purpose back into Siegfried's life.



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Love is about to be put to the test in a hostile world. Although the lovers are tragically doomed to die, Siegfried's love and idealism holds firm under the onslaught which Rothbart unleashes upon him, forcing Rothbart to overplay his hand, in the process destroy himself.

The magic relationship between the ideal and reality is yet another theme central to the new realization of *Swan Lake*. Kollinger explains: "*Swan Lake* is symbolic of the coming of human beings at all times for a life of freedom from dignity...and for a truly human existence. Progress and real harmonies are only achieved through struggle and sacrifice. Rothbart is able to destroy his opponents physically, but he cannot destroy the ideas which have governed their lives...*Swan Lake* for us is not just a work of poetic and beauty, but a ballet in which the poetry is of great social significance."

Of considerable significance in the Schilling-Kollinger reduction of *Swan Lake* was the state of mind of Tchaikovsky at the time of composition. It is a work, suggests Kollinger, in which Tchaikovsky's own complex psychological reactions to his social experiences are sublimated into a fantasy. The music depicts two worlds which implacably confront each other. Tchaikovsky, like Siegfried, was forced to live in two worlds, and was increasingly confronted by both of them.

In Tchaikovsky's case, at the time of composing *Swan Lake*, there was on the one hand the twilight world of homosexuality in which he was increasingly becoming embroiled despite himself, to the point where he was suffering attack by gossip-mongers at the Moscow Conservatoire when he was a celebrated teacher. On the other hand, there was the happy, normal family life of his brothers and above all his sister in which he delighted.

Indeed, *Swan Lake* started as a little dance work for his sister's children which he danced with them in 1871.

Another curious anecdote, on Tchaikovsky's fascination with dance was to follow in 1873. On a commission from The Bolshoi he had already started work on the full-length *Swan Lake*, when he met for the first time in Moscow, the famous French composer Camille Saint-Saëns. "They took a fancy to each other" to quote a contemporary source. Amongst other things, they collaborated to compose a short ballet on the subject of *Pygmalion and Galatea*. It was performed that same year at the Moscow Conservatoire. Tchaikovsky danced the role of *Pygmalion* and Saint-Saëns that of *Galatea*.

But as work on *Swan Lake* progressed, it seemed to Tchaikovsky that the mood at the Conservatoire and throughout Moscow society in general was turning against him. In 1874 confronted with even more blatant gossip, he decided to marry.

Tchaikovsky's family, knowing his nature well, warned that marriage without love simply couldn't work for him. Yet the sort of love that Tchaikovsky so desperately needed was impossible to find, as he well knew. "Time after time I have tried to express through my music the intolerable anguish and supreme bliss of love," And in the finale to *Swan Lake* we can hear unmistakably the music, filled his bitter belief that love was to be found only against the direct opposition and might even then be cruelly denied realisation.

Yet he reaffirmed his intention to marry. His main concern seems to have been to protect his family and friends from the disgrace of his being publicly branded as homosexual. After the disastrous premiere of *Swan Lake* in March 1877, his resolve strengthened further. A powerful sense of fatalism descended upon him, a mood reflected in the fourth symphony, which he immediately started composing. In July of that same year he married.

He could not have made a more disastrous choice. Antonina Mikhaylovna, one of his students at the Conservatoire, was not only stupid and unattractive but a raging nymphomaniac too. The marriage was a disaster from the start. He did not love her, he told his friends, again and again. He found her physically repulsive. He grew to hate her. He considered killing her. Indeed, in October 1877 he attempted suicide, unsuccessfully.

Tchaikovsky and his wife separated and never saw each other again, although she haunted him with ever more venom and his death in 1893. The authorities thereafter attempted, as it were, to clean up the legend of their most celebrated composer. Antonina was locked away in a lunatic asylum. And as a final twist in that tale which Tchaikovsky believed had dogged him all his life, his great tragic vision which was *Swan Lake* was revised and handed over to posterity, cut, softened and muted almost beyond recognition.

Over the small single bed at Tchaikovsky's country retreat in Klin, some fifty miles out of Moscow, there still hangs his favourite painting. It is a painting of romantic cloud-wrept moonlight over a lake. His dream of *Swan Lake* was central to his being. And now, at long last, that dream has been realised to be performed for Australian audiences by the Berlin Kammersche Oper Ballet.

Some facts about the Komische Oper Berlin (DDR) and its Dance Theatre

Foundation of Komische Oper 1947
 Founder, first director and chief producer Walter Fehrmann (d. 1975)

Director and chief producer since 1975 Joachim Herz

Foundation of Dance Theatre 1965
 Director of the Dance Theatre and chief choreographer Tom Schilling
 Premieres since 1947 129

Ballet premieres since 1966 22

Members of the staff 744 in 1947, 770 in 1978

Principal Dancers 29 female 18 male, and guest artists

The Komische Oper is a fully subtitled State Theatre, with the character of a repertory theatre, giving about 220 performances annually of opera, operetta, musicals, ballet, and concert. About fifty performances are ballet.



BERND KOLLINGER studied ballet at the Leipzig School of Dance, and then at the University of Leipzig from 1963 to 1971, gaining his Ph.D. in Cultural Studies in 1972. He was appointed Director of the ballet of the Komische Oper in 1974.

He has published a book on dance, *Dance — Ten Aspects* (Henschel, Berlin 1975), and has written libretti for several ballets including *Benvenuto Alibi's House* (music by Hans-Dietrich Hensel), *Black Bird* (music by George Kutzer), *The Divine Comedy* (after Virgilio, with music by Beethoven), *The Creatures of Prometheus*, *The Mexican Comedia* (to Virgil's Four Seasons), these last two being given as a single evening of ballet under the title "Discovery of Love."

Dr Kollinger is a board member of the DDR Association of People in Theatre, and in 1975 was awarded the Prize for Artistic Creation for the People and in 1976 the City of Berlin Prize.

TOM SCHILLING has been chief choreographer and head of the ensemble of the Komische Oper Ballet since its foundation.

Schilling was first a solo dancer with the ballet companies of Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin, then director of ballet and chief choreographer in Weimar and Dresden.

Among his widely varying choreographic achievements are the East German premieres of *Ascalaph's The Foundation of Balthazar*, *Prokofiev's The Stone Flower*, *Berlioz's Faust*, *Ferré*, and *Henck's Undine*.

He has also choreographed the world premieres of *The Highgate* by Otto Reinhold, *Impulses* by Ilse Kudemusch, *The Double* by Fritz Genschel, *Whirlwind and March* by Siegfried Marbus, and *Black Bird* by Georg Kutzer.

Besides these adventurous and abstract ballets, Schilling has also created a variety of realistic and narrative ballets including *Ege's Theatre*, *Symphonie Fantastique* to Berlioz's music, *Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet*, *Cinderella* and *Coppelia* by Delibes (for the Berlin State Opera ballet).

He has choreographed his own *La Mer* for the Callberg Ballet in Stockholm, as well as ballets for the Ballet de la Wajkone in Charlotte, the Grand Ballet Chiqueur in Paris, the Vienna State Opera ballet, the Norwegian Ballet in Oslo, the Royal Opera ballet in Copenhagen, and the Poznan Dance Theatre in Poland.

Tom Schilling was awarded the Art Prize of the DDR in 1970, the National Prize in 1972. He is director of the department of choreography at the Hans Otto University for Theatre in Leipzig where he was appointed Professor in 1976.





HERMANN NEEF (dramaturg) has supervised all productions of the Company since 1971 in his capacity as dramatic adviser. Born in 1936 he is a graduate of the Humboldt University, Berlin in musicology and dramatics. He has extensive experience as a record producer and has published several books on the theatre.

JOHN CRANKO was born in Rattersburg in South Africa in 1927. He studied ballet with Dulcie Hovew in Cape Town, where at the age of sixteen he created his first work for the Cape Town Ballet Club. He went to London in 1946 to train as a dancer in the Sadler's Wells Ballet under Ninette de Valois and Peggy van Praagh. He soon gave up dancing to concentrate entirely on choreography, creating his first major ballet *Swan Lake* in 1949 for the Sadler's Wells Ballet. In 1957 he created the first British full-length ballet *Prince of the Pagodas* to music by Benjamin Britten and with designs by John Piper. It was however only after 1961, when he became director of the Stuttgart Ballet, that his full talents were revealed, in the twelve years between then and his tragic early death in 1973 at the age of 46, he developed an entirely individual style, with especial qualities in narrative ballets, that became legendary of his own lifetime and have continued to influence choreographers and dancers all over the world.



ELEONORE KLEIBER (costume designer) has been in charge of costume design at the Komische Oper since 1968. She worked closely with Walter Felsenstein and has also designed his productions by Joachim Herz and Tom Schilling including *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Laids Romanesque*, *Job*, *Mohammed* and *Swan Lake*.

LOTHAR SEYDARTH (conductor) was born in 1931 and completed his studies in piano and conducting at the Leipzig Academy. Among the several important conducting posts he held are the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra (1967-71) and the German National Theatre, Weimar (1971-74). He is actively involved in the promotion of new music and is a frequent guest conductor in many European countries.



JOCHEN PENKE (set designer) was born in 1941 and studied under Professor Rölger at Berlin Weissensee Art College and subsequently under Karl von Appen. Since 1971 he has been resident designer at the Deutsches Theater, Berlin, and apart from his work on *Swan Lake* for the Komische Oper he is a guest lecturer at the Art College.

A PREVIEW OF SOME 1980* SHOWS!

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a Traitor has No Home!


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IN **The Old Country**
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COMEDY ROMANCE & ADVENTURE
ON THE MURRAY RIVER

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Some of the dancers



HANNELORE REY was a pupil at the Palucca School, Dresden. She started her career at the State Theatre, Dresden, at first in the corps de ballet, later as solo dancer. In 1966 she concluded additional studies at the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad. In the same year she joined the Komische Oper. In 1968 she gained third place and a bronze medal during the International Ballet Competition in Vienna and, together with Roland Gaskel, the prize for the best pair.

In 1969 she was given the title of "Prima Ballerina". The Government of the GDR honoured her artistic achievements by awarding her the Art Prize in 1970 and the National Prize in 1971. Hannelore Rey dances the main roles in ballets of the international standard repertoire as well as the choreography by Schilling of *Abravax*, *Cinderella Padine*, *Symphonic Fantasiaque Der Doppelgänger* (The Double), *Romeo and Juliet*, *Black Bird*, *La Mer Maitre*, *Swan Lake*, *Flaming Dances* and *Parade*.

HANA VLACHILOVA received her training as a ballet dancer from 1968-72 at the Prague Conservatory. 1972-73 she continued her studies at the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad in the master class of Natalia Dudinskaya. In 1972 she became principal dancer of the Prague National Theatre. There she danced all important roles of the international ballet repertoire like *Swan Lake*, *Afternoon of a Faun*, *Cinderella*, *Spartacus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Giselle*, *Chopin*. Guest performances led her to many European countries including Hungary, Italy, France, Greece. From 1974-75 she was a guest artist at the Komische Oper, Berlin, dancing *Juliet* and in 1978 she danced *Ophelia* in Tom Schilling's new *Swan Lake* production. At the Berlin State Opera she dances solo roles in the Balanchine choreography *Symphony in C* (Bartók) and *The Four Temperaments* (Hindemith).



YVONNE VERDUGG trained in Utrecht and The Hague with Soaja Gaskel and Rud van Danting, amongst others. 1966-73 she was first principal dancer with the National Ballet, Amsterdam and 1974-75 she held the same position in Düsseldorf. She has been connected with the Komische Oper as a guest principal dancer since 1978. She performs leading roles in works of the classical ballet repertoire as well as works by Rud van Danting and George Balanchine. She has participated in guest performances in Poland and Yugoslavia and many countries of Western and Southern Europe as well as South America.



JÜRGEN HOHMANN graduated from the Palucca School in Dresden in 1965 and began his career at the German State Opera in Berlin. In 1966 he became a solo dancer with the Komische Oper. In 1972-73 he worked at the Friedrichstadt Palace. Since 1973 he again became a member of the Komische Oper Company. He danced leading and principal roles in *Fant Fata, Laïné, Rosin and Julet, Cinderella, La Fille mal gardée, Black Bush, Don Quixote, Rerur, Swan Lake, Youth Symphonies, Evening Dancers, Pastoral, Gavotte, Jeu de Cartes*. In 1977 he became first solo dancer with the Komische Oper.



JUTTA DEUTSCHLAND trained at the State Ballet School, Berlin from 1969 to 1976 joining the Komische Oper in 1976 and performing solo roles since 1977. Leading roles in *Don Quixote, Rerur, Swan Lake, Youth Symphonies, Lehemzest, Pastoral, Gavotte*.

VLADIMIR FEDJANIN studied in Leningrad. In 1967 he joined the Ballet Ensemble of the Kirov Theatre. In 1970 he changed over to the Stanislavski-Nemirovitch-Deutschenko-Music-Theatre in Moscow as solo dancer. In 1972 he gained first place at the International Ballet Competition in Varna and received the Gold Medal. As a leading solo dancer he danced the main roles of the classical repertoire and of many modern ballets. Since 1976 he has been first solo dancer at the Komische Oper. In Berlin and on tour he has interpreted leading roles with great success including *La Fille mal gardée, Black Bush, Huashudramma, Rerur, Swan Lake, Youth Symphonies, Evening Dancers, Jeu de Cartes, Lehemzest, Pastoral, Gavotte*.



LARISSA DOBROSCHAN trained 1958 to 1967 at the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad. From 1967 to 1970 at the Kirov Theatre Leningrad and from 1970 solo dancer at the Stanislavski-Nemirovitch-Deutschenko-Music-Theatre in Moscow. Since 1976 solo dancer at the Komische Oper, leading roles including *Rerur, Don Quixote, La Fille mal gardée, Youth Symphonies, Evening Dancers, Lehemzest, Pastoral, Gavotte, Swan Lake*.



ROLAND GAYLIE received his training at the Dresden State Theatre, where he began his career in 1962. In 1965 he continued his studies at the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad, with A.P. Pushkin amongst others. In 1966 he became solo dancer in Dresden. At the same time, he signed a contract with Komische Oper as a guest artist. From 1967 he was with the Komische Oper, and in 1978 he joined the State Opera.

Together with Hans-Joachim Hey he was awarded the Prize for the best pair at the International Ballet Competition in Vienna in 1968. In 1969 he was awarded the title of "Meisterkünstler". In 1979 he was honoured by the Government of GDR, by being awarded the Art Prize and in 1973 the National Prize. Roland Gaylie's repertoire comprises the important parts of the traditional ballet but his reputation is enhanced by his interpretation of the leading roles in Tom Schilling's productions such as *Abraxas*, *Symphonic Fantastique*, *Cinderella*, *Der Doppelgänger*, *Lehrke*, *Roméo und Julia*, *Black Book*, *La Mer* and *Wauk*. At the Berlin State Opera he has been dancing leading roles in *Spanisches* (Sergei), *The Three Musketeers* (Seyffert), *Carmen Suite* (Allomat), *Cremata of the World* (Kassackina Waukigow). Guest performances as solo dancer as well as a member of the Komische Oper have taken him to many countries in Europe and the Near East.

MICHAEL GAVRIKOV attended Ballet School, Baku from 1949 to 1959. Followed by Master Class of the Waganova Ballet School in Leningrad from 1959 to 1960. 1956-1976 he was first solo dancer with the Opera and Ballet Theatre of Baku, where he danced the male leading roles in *Swan Lake*, *Marmarier*, *Swan Sleeping*, *Armen*, *Giselle*, *Cinderella* etc. 1968-69 solo dancer with the Komische Oper. Leading roles in *Abraxas*, *Symphonic Fantastique* and *Cinderella*. In 1971 he graduated from the Science of Ballet course with the Leningrad Theatre Institute. 1972-76 coach with the Opera and Ballet Theatre, Baku. Since 1976 Chief Assistant at the Leipzig Theatre Academy (classical ballet and history of choreography). Since 1977 guest appearances at the Komische Oper (as coach and répétiteur-ballet-master).



THOMAS HARTMANN studied at the Palucca School, Dresden. Since 1970 he has been based at the State Opera, Dresden. Leading roles, amongst others, in *Giselle*, *Der Fieschling*, (*I'll be Temptation*), *Der Grosse Fische* (*The Great Fish*), and guest performances as solo dancer at the Komische Oper since 1979. Leading roles in *Swan Lake*, *Evening Dances*, *Lebenszeit*.



DIETER HULSE is a graduate of the Palucca School, Dresden. From 1970-74 he performed at the State Opera, Dresden. Since 1974 he has been solo dancer of the Komische Oper. Leading roles in *Roméo und Julia*, *Cinderella*, *La Mer*, *Doane Comed*, *Human Comedy*, *Swan Lake*, *Fourth Symphony*, *Pastorale*, *Giselle*.

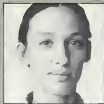
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OPERA



By David Gyger

Summer Season

This year's summer opera season at the Sydney Opera House got under way with an extremely low-key double bill from the national company, a couple of works from the 18th and 20th centuries. Alessandro Scarlatti's *The Triumph of Hercules* and William Walton's *The Bear*, which played in repertoire last month of January with a guest revival of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* from the Victoria State Opera.

Not unexpectedly, it was *The Pearl Fishers* which brought out a rash of House Full signs, being as it was an excellent realisation of a piece by the composer of *Carmen* that had not been seen in Sydney for many years.

Aesthetically, though, there was nothing to complain about in the double bill. Indeed, it was one of the more commendable programming efforts the AO has come up with in recent years: an interesting complementary blend of the old and the new superbly performed all round.

THE BEAR - BIZARRE ROMANCE

Dramatically of course, *The Bear* is merely an operatic reworking of a rather basic Chekhov story about a business romance between a young and attractive widow and one of her husband's creditors: the bear of the title.

Whether one was familiar with Chekhov's bear or only Walton's, this production (planned by Tim Lingwood and directed by Robert Linsay) should have satisfied. Only the lighting, by Anthony Fotheringham, was wrong (at least on opening night) in the sense of being too bright at the outset to convey the mock-



Robert Eddle (left) and Gregory Yarnish (center) in the AO's *The Bear*. Photo: Bruce Gray

mourning of Popova that dominates the opening pages of the opera. (This aspect of the production had improved immensely, along with several others, by the last performance of the season on January 26.)

Linsay came up with some nice touches of direction in handling both his leading players, something Walton's score demands for maximum effect in the theatre, since it only rarely delivers even a little way beneath the surface of the story's events. It is, indeed, fair criticism of Walton's *Bear* that it not only fails to add anything to Chekhov's but even falls short by a rather wide margin of doing justice to its source. To succeed, a performance of this opera requires two central performers dramatically proficient enough to have succeeded in the original one-act play, but who can sing as well.

The lion's share of the demands of *The Bear* both as play and as opera falls on the shoulders of the woman who plays the marvellously human part of Madame Popova: the young widow aggressively in deep mourning, if perhaps misguided as to the appropriate duration thereof. In fact, *The Bear*'s great strength as a work of creative art lies in the fact that both of its central protagonists are in distress at the outset, distress which is transformed, in less than an hour of continuous integrity,

first into quite violent antagonism and then to love.

It is immensely to the credit of Heather Begg the performer that she found it in herself to play Madame Popova so soon — a matter of only a few weeks — after she had lost her own husband in real life. And prove, in the event, the personal artistic triumph of the first month of this year's summer opera season, for she supplemented her triumph as Madame Popova with a marvellous recreation of her infamous Lady Jane in *Flower*, which opened late in January for a brief run of non-subscription performances.

Overall, *The Bear* was a thoroughly successful team effort even if the lion's share of the credit for its success must go to Begg. On opening night, Gregory Yarnish lacked the stature, both dramatic and vocal, to prove a satisfying foil to Begg's Popova. By the end of the season he had quite justified the trust displayed by the AO in preferring him to John Shaw, the world premiere Nemov who was presumably available to sing the role in this production had he been required.

Robert Eddle made as much as the production allowed him to make of the servant Luka. Perhaps one could conceive him to be a little less the buffoon and a little more the real-life personality than Linsay

did in this relationship, but it was quite clear that when Father did on stage he had been told to do, and no disrespect to the dramatic impact of the piece was involved.

This *Beau* also marked the Sydney conducting debut of David Krahn who acquitted himself very well indeed, missing just about no nuance of the often intricate, if seldom profound, score. Coupled with Krahn's excellent *Songs* in Brisbane last year, it surely makes a strong claim for him to be given more opportunities to display his skills in Sydney and Melbourne in the near future.

TRIUMPH OF HONOUR

The other half of the year's opening double bill, Scarlatti's *The Triumph of Honour*, was less satisfying overall even if it had the benefit of seasons in Adelaide, Brisbane and Melbourne prior to its Opera House debut. There, it played on its own, but rightly was finally deemed too flimsy to satisfy an audience unacquainted hence the Sydney coupling with *The Beau*.

There are no complaints to be registered about this production of *The Triumph of Honour* in itself. Peter Cooke's designs are workable and eye-catching, Franco Casavola's direction is innovative enough to eliminate at least some of the inherent ennui of the most 18th-century opera staged for 20th-century audiences. It makes a comfortable place for a work the vast majority of whose action takes place in the second half, to skip the interval and play it straight through, as was done in Sydney for the first time.

Yet more prising still is required for

having the work alive for audiences in the 1980s despite a full complement of satisfying performances ranging in quality from very good to excellent-plus (none scaled the ramparts of the electrifying or the definitive) these were moments of tedium even in this *Triumph of Honour*.

Of the individual efforts, the most interesting, to me at least, was that of John Furland as Erasmus. For Furland is a newcomer to the national company and I had encountered him in the flesh previously only as a member of the supporting cast in Brian Howard's *Four Pavers* for the Victorian State Opera last year — not a part where he had much opportunity to display his vocal wares to very much effect.

In *The Triumph of Honour*, Furland sang strongly and pleasingly, and acted forcefully. Overall it was a performance to make one look forward with real anticipation to the Papageno he is scheduled to do in *The Magic Flute* late in the year.

Ronald Macenagie was an excellent Bombarda and Giacomo Tosi's Flavio — the closest anyone in the cast, perhaps, came to the definitive despite some unconvincing shades, at the outset, of his comic servants in *The Toss of the Buffoons*.

As the conventionally virtuous young ladies of the piece, Judith Saliba and Kathleen Moore were indistinguishably good. Cynthia Johnson provided some popular comic roles as the worldly-wise maid Rosina, though she can't quite get away any longer with playing a teenage coquette as did Margaret Russell the first

person I saw in the role, in Brisbane early in 1981.

The disappointments of the revival were Elizabeth Fennell's Aunt Cornelia, who was inclined to swoop on her sons like a dove bomber out of control that is a good deal more likely than not to miss its target altogether, and Paul Farrow's Riccardo which, though very well sung indeed, never convinced that Riccardo was a rose and a rake instead of an eminently likable romantic tenor lead.

Probably, Richard David conducted with unequivocal commitment and unforgiving energy and an immaculate sense of style.

Even while admiring the enterprise of the AO in devising this off-beat double bill and presenting it with such style, though, one finds it hard not to nod off when you hear of Scarlatti's problematical reputation in specific leads. Finally, *The Triumph of Honour* no matter how well done — must reluctantly be conceded to be something of an endurance trial to present-day audiences.

It was absolutely right to couple it for this season, with a much happier contemporary work like *The Beau* if only once or the other half of this annual double bill had had a bit more meat on its bones, the overall score or might well have seemed in retrospect to be considerably more meritorious.

WELCOME RETURN OF PATIENCE

The other AO opening of the month was a welcome return visit of last year's John Cox production of *Patience*, wearing its (admittedly not great) age caperily and playing on a non-rehearsal basis to audiences who were quite clearly different almost to the last person from those who saw it in its original manifestation.

Yet as one who had seen it before I know Magic found myself bored by the proceedings. Instead, there were a host of reasons to be registered that had been overlooked in the initial impact of the original which was so different from non-of-the-art Gilbert and Sullivan as to sweep many a colubus out of many a brain and overwhelm one with the realization that G and S can be infinitely more than a gaggle of cardboard caricats adopting an interminable sequence of pre-ordained postures, the name of the piece being interchangeable as the names and attributes of the dramatic personae.

Suffice it to say that of a cast that was identical to last year's I found particular pleasure in witnessing the acquaintance of Heather Begg's Lady Jane, Robert Gard's Grosvenor, Rhonda Bruce's Patience and Dennis Olsen's Hawthorne in that order. They, according to me anyone, were all magnificent, but some of them, just a trifle more magnificent than others.



Heather Begg (Lady Jane) and Dennis Olsen (Hawthorne), in the AO's *Patience*. Photo: Bruce G. Goss



Gloria Fowler and James Lancaster in the 1979 *Pearl Fishers*.

PEARL FISHERS — PARTICULAR ACHIEVEMENT

In closing, though, I would like to say just a few more about the VSO *Pearl Fishers* mentioned at the start: it was an excellent production all round of a piece that arguably has received less than its fair share of exposure over the years since it was written, and it was good to see it getting that sort of audience response it managed to attract at the Sydney Opera House. It was a particular achievement for

the VSO to be able to double cast it so strongly, even if with the admitted aid of some talent on loan from the national company. It was even more commendable as an effort from conductor Richard Dwyll, who moulded a scratch orchestra and a basically unempowered chorus and two lots of principals into coherent, convincing, and at its best can be convincingly beautiful, performance.

I preferred the alternative cast to the one which got the nod on opening night, but I only saw the first cast when it was suffering

from the combined disadvantages of under-preparation and a few technical mishaps.

As for, Yeoman Kenny was the epitome of the virginal priestess but seemed to flag a bit on the depth-of-emotion front. Gloria Fowler, though occasionally troubled vocally where Kenny was not, was much more down to earth and convincing.

John Pongle was a mild-mannered, low-key Zargo who never failed to please the ear but at the same time never managed to provoke one's sense of dramatic verisimilitude. Robert Besterhoff sang with perfectly less skill but added a marvellously rough-and-ready kind of stage presence that made him absolutely credible as the kind of chap likely to be elected chief of a rough-and-ready group of unsophisticated fishermen on a stormy sea.

Kath Lewis was vocally ideal for the tender heart of Nader whereas Justin Lancaster's voice is inherently a bit small, at least as yet, for the part. The astounding thing about the entire cast was that both have so obviously been endowed with that most rare of operatic assets, a fierce voice of considerable beauty coupled with the ability to use it to considerable effect.

Noel Mangera Nourabad was an equally great asset to both casts, but the overall result of the quality assessment exercise implied by the above must be that the alternative cast came over better than the premiere cast.

No matter how you look at it, the VSO *Pearl Fishers* added up to a thoroughly glowing stage realisation of a work too seldom performed. But at the same time, a word of caution: it would be premature to hail the VSO as the strength of this season alone, as a second AD or anything like it. Mounting a single production for a series of performances and then going on to rehearse one's next effort during a period free of performance obligations is the usual modus operandi of the VSO and as it is, in quite a different thing from fulfilling the function of a full-time repertory company which at any one typical moment in its working life must be performing two or three productions in repertory even as it rehearses for others due to open in the near future.

This is not in any way to belittle the VSO effort in staging *The Pearl Fishers* (as well as the Sydney Opera House in January), merely to emphasise that one or two productions, no matter how marvellous, do not of themselves a full-blown opera company make — any more than the advent of a single swallow, according to the old adage, proves the arrival of a full-blown summer.

DAVID GIGER is editor of *Opera Australia*.

THEATRE/ACT

Excellent business

JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR OLIVER!

By John Pabley

Jesus Christ Superstar by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice. Canberra Theatre Trust and CTC Channel 7 at the Canberra Theatre. ACT. Opened 10 January 1980.

Director: Terry McConnell. **Musical director:** Keith Morgan. **Designer:** Anthony Bellotti. **Choreographer:** Kim Henderson.

Cast: Anne Rony Falls (Jesus Christ), Mark Jackson (Mary Magdalene), Elizabeth Lord (Pilate), Andrew McNeillie (John the Baptist), Michael Douglas (Carpenter), Gary Mitchell (Peter), Colin Slater (Herod), Derek Brownlie (Cochan Herod), John Corbett, US House, Ian McDonald, Peter McDonald, Phil O'Connor.

(Photo: Don)

Oliver! by Lionel Bart. Tempo Theatre at Theatre Trust, Canberra, ACT.

Director: David Macdonald. **Musical Director:** Keith Morgan. **Designer:** Gary Mitchell. **Choreographer:** Derek Brownlie. **Set designer:** Ronald Brown.

Cast: Anne Rony Falls (Jesus Christ), Andrew McNeillie (John the Baptist), Michael Douglas (Carpenter), Gary Mitchell (Peter), Ian McDonald, Peter McDonald, Phil O'Connor.

After decades of dull summer, Canberra came alive last year with the Canberra Theatre Trust's production of *MARS PLAYERS*. The success of that production not only encouraged the CTT to take a risk again, with a production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, but also brought the local amateur specialists in evidence, Tempo, out of their summer torpor with a production of *Oliver!* Both productions are doing excellent business and for different reasons deserve to do so.

Superstar opened with promising results, the chorus singing with exciting clarity and energy and the lighting, amplified music and special effects all combining to generate that special tension which almost alone justifies these big budget productions. But the early promise wasn't quite fulfilled.

Two major handicaps were the unreliable set and the economically dictated decision to use corded microphones. These seemed at times to be half a hundred of these on-stage, making their snaking leads around, between, above and below the performers, making movement fraught with risk. I sat in an agony of curiosity that some unfortunate solist would be suddenly immobilised, the microphone ripped from the hands by a tangled chorus. Indeed, Mark Jackson (Jesus) frequently employed a shell balalaika which occasionally sounded involuntary.

Movement was of course restricted by the necessity to keep noise levels clear. And the set too, gave little help in the choreographer, Kim Henderson. Two ramps on left and right running up and away from the audience passed across the back by a twelve foot walkway, formed a squash-squash-like area, stage centre, which contained most of the action. I came in here the interval hoping the set would be changed allowing different choreographic patterns. I was disappointed.

Yet quite frequently the high quality of individual performers lifted the show, despite the limitations of movement, set and costume. Virginia Lowe (Mary Magdalene) singing 'I Don't Know How To Love Him' got the hairs on the back of the neck stirring, and Craig Maclean (Judas), Philip Smith (Simon) and Stephen Pike (Peter) contributed fully. Colin Slater (Pontius Pilate) has a clarity of voice and characterisation which would have earned a good round of the curtain call if there had been one. There wasn't, which is my final complaint. Maybe Terry McConnell as director felt the mood of the final scene was too propitious to diffuse with such a foppish act a call. Whatever the thinking behind the decision, I think it was dull. Instead of rousing the audience to a high land over-all the show had enough drive and energy to lead us towards and the final moments left the audience with the sensation of being denied its rights. A pity.

Tempo's production of *Oliver!* gives more (for less) than I've used to expecting.

from local amateur companies. I was delighted by the efforts of this large cast and found most to praise their quality over Joyce Macdonald's direction is intelligent and generous, allowing her cast plenty of opportunity to show their talents and encouraging them to play to their strengths. Thus Charles Oliver's high-tempo Fagin was a surprising pleasure, making a new kind of sense of Fagin's ambivalence. Half explorer, half protector Russell Brown, also responsible for the collector and flexible one, was a fine Mr Bumble but might have done better not to force his voice into the understandable lower register. The voice I liked best was that of Kara Peters (Nancy). I regretted that she wasn't given a chance to sing, unaccompanied (perhaps during a repeat).

But it's the children who carry the show and though there was a little sticking in the chorus work on opening night (probably?), they were obviously well rehearsed and directed. David McCubbin (Dodger) charmed his way out of a moment of uncertainty with remarkable poise and mood and otherwise displayed a very engaging talent. A little more detail and precision of characterisation wouldn't go amiss however. As Oliver, Stuart Davey achieved a nice balance between pious and perceptive that suggested both the victim and the survivor.

The orchestra, unseen, and unable staff to see the full stage, did justice to the score which plunges from Oom Pa Pa to haunting waltz calls. A fine effort from Tempo, long may they prosper.



Mark Jackson (Jesus) in CTC's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Photo: Australian Information Centre, ACT.

THEATRE/NSW



State Rep./Laurie Wagner, Exec. Editor

Questions of universal importance

BULLIE'S HOUSE

By Barry O'Connor

Bullie's House by Thomas Kennedy. Revised Edition. Sydney: Sydney 9076. Dated February 4, 1988. Director: Ben Maclean. Designer: Michael Fennell. Lighting Designer: Keith Edmondson. Stage Manager: Michael Monaghan. Music: Philip Lindsay. Properties: Ross Hocking. Characters (Bullie): Adam Compton, Corran, Ben Maclean, Melvin, Bill Conn, John Howard, Barry Smith. Characters: Joseph (Swabber), Francis (Clay), Don (Bark), Hugh (Bark), Walter (Bark), Maurice (Philip Lindsay) (Protagonist).

Bullie's House marks novelist Tom Kennedy's return to the theatre after an eight-year absence and the modest success of *An Ideal House* in 1972. The present play reintroduces the concerns of *The Chair of Justice* *Blackboard* but instead of Victorian Australia and a rather out of control morality, *Bullie's House* is set in the 1980s in a mission station in Arnhem Land where the integrity of good intentions takes place. It's a small community, only three whites and four blacks, but it's a microcosm of the relations, and more to the point, irreducible cultural antipathies of black and white Australia.

Bullie's House is rated by a leak wind with mysteriously leaves the other houses the mission intact. The moral dilemma 'as Bullie rebelled against the advent of 'the' and defy the Wengas or shaman. Or does he go ahead, as the whites urge, confident that he is merely one of eclectic retrocology? (A little European explanation is that



Bob Maclean, Martin Morris and Janine Saunders in Kennedy's *Bullie's House*. Photo: Robert McFarlane

Bullie incurred the wrath of God on a bit of Old Testament bloody-mindedness).

The house is not subtle, but a monument of tribal mysticism is erected in the middle of the mission compound in government cement. These Rangs are the most secret tribal totem, the embodiment of black wisdom derived from a time when mankind was at one with the planet. The Rangs are forbidden to white men and black women. And they have never before been seen publicly except for a fleeting five seconds, when the Rangs shared scenes time with *Murky Mouse* in a movie made by an American university team who bearded up a co-operative black into revealing his secrets to them.

Thus time the blacks have revealed the Rangs is the hope that the whites will recognise. The poignancy of Kennedy's play is that the whites have no reply, we have no Rangs, no mystery. Modern society has no magic, it has no integrity. Ironically the expectations of the blacks are materialising not spiritual, impractical in wanting the British Museum but surely not in wanting a new generator. Even those things which can be provided are obstructed by forms or etiquette and fiscal obfuscation. The anthropologist brings

books in a desperate but well meaning attempt to make reciprocity. But the books are second hand and don't tell you how to marry a healthy wife (Bullie had had trouble with a tubercular man). What help can come from a world which progress has atomised, where communications are impossible, and there are no reactions behind the labels any more.

The play is loosely based on historical events that took place in the 1930s on an island off north east Queensland. Most of the important events have already taken place before the play begins, and the action is continually referring back to passed incidents. The levelling of Bullie's house, the coming of the American anthropologists, the drawing of the missionary's wife in Bullie's company. The result is a sense of non-event on stage — even the murder is barely seen to happen — which focuses attention on the ideas. Kennedy presents after the manner of a Shavian drama of ideas. These ideas, however, are given breadth and humanity in the actors' handling of their characters.

Attila Compton's Bullie has been handed the centre of the play by its author, but Compton will want a keener edge to

May there. Bob Mayo's tribal elder and Justice Saunders' Doctor are fine. Kevin Smith's Walker is very good as nature's clown and sympathetic fool. He is the only man of passion in the play, he is rich languishing in the horrors of Fanny Hill for his friend. Don Ross's Professor Clary represents the usual academic anguish of knowing that something should be done. The government man, played by Bill Conn, embodies the average Australian attitude. He wants to be mates with the black bastards but only on his own petty suburban terms. A very good performance. The most interesting character, the Rev Hugh Barton, is not developed enough. It's a pity because Martin Harris shows that he has the resources to take the character where the dramatist dared not or could not go.

Bulle's Moons does not answer the many questions it raises. On the contrary, it shows that there are no answers, no easy ones anyway. Director Ken Hauer's matter of fact, that is to say objective, handling of the play ensures that this is not going the whole piece is some of improvised immediacy. Designer Michael Pearce and lighting man Keith Edmundson provide an unclashed and timeless stage-scape against which Keneally's questions of universal (not to mention) importance can be posed.

The play starts with a solitary degradation, soon followed by a church choir. At the end of the play the significance of this musical introduction is clear. After two hundred years the aboriginal scream of despair has the muted and gradual tones of the degenerate. Now the chaotic system of European civilisation has been eased in response, and eased appropriately to destruction pitch at the Nimrod Upland.



Martin Harris and Charles Shaw. *Robman* at the Acting Co. Broadway

Awesome vaccuity

ELIZABETH I BROADWAY

By Robert Page

The Acting Company of New York, produced by the theatricals Theatre Trust and the Adelphi Provincial Arts, the Majesty's Theatre, Sydney. N.Y. Elizabeth I by Paul Ineson. Opened 3 February 1981. Director: Ineson. Lyrics: Laura Childs. Broadway by George Abbott and Philip Dunning. Director: Gerald Cassarone. Designer: John Lee Remly. Opened 16 February 1980.

Cast: Lisa Blum, J. Michael Butler, Suzanne Cordiller, Janet McElroy, John Lombard, Bartlett Blyth, Lisa Wells, Matthew Rutherford, Robert Jaffe, Tom Bellitto, Charles Allen Robinson, Scott Walters, Charles Walters, William McElroy, Randle Hall, Richard Green.

(Producers)

God bless America. Huge income, major consumer of the world's consumables, a superpower by virtue of its destructive

capability, the only country able to afford to give some of its people a holiday on the moon, creator of the jumbo jet, it is unapproachable by virtue of statistics.

Presently the Acting Company — with a map of the place as its logo — is here to impress us. Again the statistics are stated out, 37 plays in 165 cities in 37 American states before 735,000 people, travelling over 75,000 miles — and this year Australia! Citations and nominations for Critics Circle, Drama Desk and Obie Awards (but how many did they actually get?). It has been called "the finest repertory company in New York City" by the New York Times, which prompts the question, how many others are there?

Their programme must this month juggle one-two-out of three, for *The White Devil*, as I understand it, unaccompanied too far out for Sydney. The Big Shrike is thought unable to cope with such an outrageous phenomenon as park (that weren't the multi-coloured rivers washed out and the razor blades surgically removed several years ago?). What we'd get was *Elizabeth I*, American author Pa Foster's romp, proving that an offbeat look at a queen, and *Robman*, a no — which would be ask Mickey Spil — except that it's now old even for the

Imagined Man of La Mancha? — that hint of wit, humanity and farmand of Cervantes, or the plays

over all of *Restaurants and Goodbyes* are *Dead* and of course entitled of any comment on the human condition, add in, with large measure, the approach and style of *Goodbye!* even down to the rainbow coloured braies, and you have some vision of the awesome vacuity of the production of *Elizabeth!* I would add that by report, Sydney's New Theatre apparently made a good lot of the piece several years ago, but should labour on the grounds that to do an firstly may appear strangely parochial, secondly that it cannot be given first hand and finally that it is hardly conceivable.

It is one of those plays which lurches on the Great Figure of History, but is fearfully modern, alienated and Brechtian in that it keeps breaking out of its true documentary purpose to being simply a group of players performing a play about... So, we have to have, actors playing actors in the role of the lying, road to presenting their play about Elizabeth to Elizabeth... in which case why, as period players do they wear rainbow braies and pants? It's all too confusing.

Surprisingly the piece arrives under the name of *Little Cuckoo* who not only danced but won an award here for *The Jester Deceives*, a fact which the arena publicity machine managed to overlook entirely. Talking of wrong it's sobering to

realise that even directors with such a high position on the Great Chain of Being as he has, were not to be human after all.

High expectations can, of course lead to hefty disappointments. Consider Woodsworth nurturing for years in the imagination a vision of the covering majesty of Mount Blanc but finding in actuality what amounted to only a lump of rock. If that explains my reaction to night one, the reverse effect should have operated for night two.

Nonetheless, despite irregularities, I did think if there is one thing Americans can do it must be a play about Broadway — after all that *Wait Until You're Older* is their home ground. The issue even expressing a lump of rock was going too far... what we got was a pitiable.

For whatever the name Broadway may conjure in the mind, this hasn't got it. The setting is, supposedly, though it is very oddly shaped, the backstage area of the *Paradise Night Club*, some kind of speakeasy in New York. The role calls of a gangster taking a rival from disappointment, motives (no significance for American spectators in case you're looking for bigger themes) and is finally shot by the rival's wife who has been undercover as one of the chorus girls all the time. Of equal non-importance is the story of the performer going the girl who is

temporarily bedazzled by the demented show business team Tiffany's stolen by — you guessed — the baddy.

The only interest in the show comes when the girls, at regular intervals, line up to make their entrance on the stage of the night club behind the one relentlessly loomed on our attention. By first interval one couldn't help being put out of the night club patrons, who seemed to be giving much the best side of the show. The piece was proved when finally we were treated to the big finish.

Perhaps it was unfair of the promoters to put what is really... statements or not — a group of drama students in a major commercial venue, but then the company's air of having a right to be there which their entrepreneurs from blame. Minutes of individual performances seem useless when all... as a new blood's most equally clamoured for attention and were, master's demands, interchangeable in their mirrored gestures and poses.

There was plenty of material here for *Welcome Back Kotter* but unfortunately uncoloured genre, apparently little else. What was missing was the consistent display of youthful charm which never deteriorated into a fallacious approach. If this is the crumb as which the future of American stage rests, there needs to be a lot more chemistry for optimism.



Four actors (left to right: Michael Biehn, Jane Robison, Marked Baker, and Jane Robison) in the stage play *Elizabeth!*

One woman musical

SONGS MY MOTHER DIDN'T TEACH ME

By Derek Peat

Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me by Peter Harty and John Mulder. Theatre Pastiche, Sydney. NSW. Closed 2 January 1995.
Director: Pauline and Designer: Peter Harty
Choreography: Karen Johnson
Nancy is widowed. Liz Harris, Nancy's eleven-year-old niece, is in France with John Mulder.

Nancy, a good catholic country girl, comes to Sydney and falls in with a disreputable dinner teacher. A successful dancer, she falls in love and she's half pregnant, but Jack, the father, shoots through. Years pass. Unable to support her son, she finds Jack is now a millionaire and she gets nothing. The child is taken into care, the mother remains lonely and hard by love. But, she tells the blind piano man who listens to her story: all is for the best because her son is now a sailor.

Pretty amazing stuff, but then there's the plot of the musical *Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me* and of such stuff are musicals made. After all, who would have believed the plot of *Eliza*, and if there are dishes, wasn't *Passions From Heaven* full of them?

Debra Potter's outstanding series of plays attempted to explore how cliché, especially those of popular songs, could articulate the inner longings and passions of individuals, not to say repressed characters, and it could laugh at itself. *Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me*, however, does little with its clichés other than contain them, and if the comment about the sailor is meant to be a monologue, it wasn't played that way.

The show, billed as "a new original musical" but book by Peter Harty and songs and lyrics by John Mulder in Mulder's case, I found myself thinking of that young man in the advert who used to be an accountant and he discovered Samuel Mulder returned a solicitor by day, perhaps he needs some more vodka. He is certainly a man of mystery. When the lights came up on-stage he was already seated at the piano wearing a black, back to the audience. I waited for him to turn. I was to wait the entire evening. The white stick and the heavy framed dark glasses indicated he couldn't see us and obviously we weren't to get the chance to see him.

Not only was this piano man blind, but dumb too. His only response to questions



Potter Harty and John Mulder in *Songs My Mother Didn't Teach Me*

was to tinkle on the keys. Since Karen Johnson did nothing but dance, that left Liz Harris, the remaining member of the cast, to do all the talking and singing. Was this the point of "original", a musical with one speaking part? If looking at a pianist's back for an evening is disconcerting for an audience, it must be even worse for the actress who has to try to act with him.

With no change of interaction onstage, Liz Harris seemed unsure in the first half whether to direct her songs to the audience, frankly acknowledging their presence, or remain within the conventions of the stage situation. She chose the latter, but it was only in the second half when she seemed to talk to the piano and sing for him that she seemed at ease. One guesses the audience are supposed to feel her isolation (the songs songs about loneliness) and Jack the millionaire (after being alone) but most of the time she seemed caught in a void between stage and audience.

The writers, aware of the problems they'd created, had provided her with an "alter ego" (Karen Johnson who appeared in various costumes from Nancy's past and danced sometimes with her and sometimes alone. Nancy's typed voice was used to speak from the past and articulate inner thoughts, but most of the time Liz Harris had to do the work, dramatizing stories in which she played all the parts, moving, singing and dancing her heart out. She's a talented singer and dancer but bereft of a supporting cast, her talent wasn't enough. She needed lines and words much better than those she was given to work with.

Not that the songs were bad. The standard was generally high and John

Mulder's playing was excellent. His songs tend to have frequent tempo changes with complicated internal lyrics. But then one from an anxious parent about a marriage proposal: "How do you lie when you don't want to be with the guy who wants to be with you?" The trouble is that while there were some excellent passages, the music was rarely catchy, nor even memorable. The book throws up the occasional comic gem, like this one from a boyfriend: "Can't come out tonight, got to drive my camp" or "Who wants to see a pregnant belly dancer and anyway I didn't want the kid to be giddy for the rest of its life", but the monologue hardly sparked.

Maybe in a different context everything would have worked. The setting was a deserted club in the small hours and I suspect that a robust interaction with the audience on tables around the stage might have provided the "intimate" atmosphere a sign outside the theatre claimed. If Liz Harris had been able to play off an audience, and acknowledge that she was a one-woman show, I think she'd have been much happier. And it's partly a matter of expectations. If a show is styled a "musical", one expects more than a string of songs held together with amusing stories.

In case I've been less than fair, I should add that the lady behind me also enjoyed the show. From beginning to end she kept up a monologue in conversation with Liz Harris, exclaiming "She's Leonard Cohen's wife, you know" "Beautiful figure hasn't she?" "I don't know how the members of it all", and her parting shot: "I could have listened to him play all night. Beautiful just beautiful."

THEATRE / QLD



By Don Hatcher/State Rep

Bingo but not jackpot

BINGO

By Claire Crowther

Notes by Edward Bond, La Boite Theatre, Brisbane Old Theatre 1 February 1990

Director: John Miles; Design: David Bell; Lights: Antony Theobald; Sound: Leonard Rodin; Cost: Shakespeare Inn studio; Old Man: Bill Walker; Jack: Brian Milner; Young Woman: Amanda Webb; Old Woman: Miriam Beaton; Wholeness: Stephen Miller; Son: Bruce Molyer; Young Man: Philip Jones; Old Man's Wife: Lyley King; Ann Johnson: Carol McNeil

Photo: Andy

"I think my plays are poetry. Poetry is what you have left when you take the prose away," so says Edward Bond of himself.

Depose: pain and thwarted humanity is what we have when we take away the verbal violence of his poetry. Take away the unique acting space of La Boite, so simply utilised by David Bellian's scorchery of English garden hedge with the odd accoutrements of plops, and you have left eleven actors exposed robotically under Rodney Theobald's lighting, moving through a scenario of unyielding mental deadlock and (mostly repressed) physical deadlocks.

The playwright's intentions, his complexity of insight into the relationship between society and its subjects provoked by the social order, the concept of money and corruption all seem lucid and heavy-handed in this production.

Shakespeare, who writes like a paragon of humanism, the radical social analyst perceiving man's inherent contradictions, is presented as

unempathetic, in Mr Miles's production, more so than in Mr Bond's play, this one only feels empathy for his highest family, represented here by the daughter (played by Rachel Skinner). As Shakespeare, Ian Austin provides vocal truth but the portrayal lacks a comprehensive presentation.

I wanted to sympathise with Will and could not in this production. No man is allusion, as was Bond's and Shakespeare's recurring thematic intent. The snow wouldn't melt in the hand of the Bard who had possible in this winter rain to late himself, and yet no sympathy was extracted by the production, despite the searching for purity and truth involved in this soliloquy. Self-realisation is more potent than any poison supposedly given by Ben Johnson. Therefore let us melt in Ian Austin's hands Mr Miles, even though the snow won't in Will's hand.

The contrasts within the production are all too stark, as simplistic as was the upland hedge, yet the Old Man managed to reveal the children as well as the poem

shows with his hedge clippers.

Designer, torturer and the hell of life as the seventeenth century and now are sledgehammered here and then the light relief begins with Act II as Ben Johnson enters. Enrol O'Neill caught the manner of his "Foot" to Shakespeare's "Lear". One only wished he had entered earlier and stayed longer because within his despair were the seeds of an earnest/innate relationship with Will, which the two actors tried for but did not quite achieve.

Shakespeare's corruption (the matrix of his morality) is more endearing than the didactic social morality of Bond. Bond's smacks of evangelism and the conviction he would seem to deny in Shakespeare, upholding and upbraiding him for his paradoxes. Playwright and director seem confused in this production as La Boite.

Mr Bond has written that there are many ways for an audience to be got at while watching a play, for instance being shot in the back of the neck, but on that promise this production doesn't give me a twinge.



David O'Neill (Johnson) and Ian Austin (Shakespeare) in La Boite's *Bingo*. Photo: Caroline Hargreaves

THEATRE/SA



Susan Vile/State Rep

Technical certainty and uncertainty

FIND THE LADY ERROL FLYNN

Find The Lady by Michael Pertwee. Playhouse Adelaide SA. Opening January 1988. Director: Ted Cragg. Designer: Shaun Collins. Lighting: Ben Brasher. Cast: *The Lady*, Kathryn Palmer, Elaine Latta, Mollie Sugden, Mrs Pauls, Myra Smedley, Tom Carroll, Gordon Fraser, Max Durrant, Phyllis Bostford, Mark Addington, Robin McEneaney. Lyrics: Fred. Author: Lark. Director: Al. Musical: Brian. Iron: Sarah. Music: Chamberlain.

(Professional)

Real Plans by Kevin By. Melbourne Road. Art: Ben. By: Bob George. Music Company: Adelaide SA. The. Music: Stephen. By: Dennis. The. Director: Ted Cragg. Music: Dennis and Bob George. Music: David. Lyrics: Stage management: Lighting: Bruce McEneaney. Costume: Choreography: Maureen Harbeck.

Cast: Fred Flynn, Andrea Clarke, Les Taylor, Nina Latta, with Maureen Harbeck, John Noble, Tim Barker, or Alan Brown. Bob George. Director: Lark. (Professional)

Michael Pertwee's *Find The Lady* is firmly embedded in the English tradition of comic whoodunnos summer season fare. As in this tradition, is the standard TV half-hour comedy, with its recognisable characters, stock situations, rapid dialogue and jellied macguffin laugh-tracks. It comes as no surprise, then, to find Mollie Sugden, known for her role as Mrs Skewton in the series *Are You Being Served?*, as leading lady and chief show-card in this holiday production at the Festival Centre.

Such a play sets out to entertain and entertain it did under Ted Cragg's



Mollie Sugden and Myra Smedley as *Find The Lady*. (Photo: Jon Holman)

direction of the sizzling faces and rollicking laughter around me were anything to go by. This was despite some clappiness in the writing, which left unexplained the activities of more than one character, and provided at times some rather weak links in the plot for the sake of a funny scene. One particularly hilarious situation, for

instance, concerning a body in a trunk, was marred by the lack of a convincing reason for the body's being put there in the first place. And, a note of disappointment: it's always disappointing if the "who" of a whoodunnos is clear before the end.

Nevertheless, Mollie Sugden gave the audience what they had come for — Mrs

Stacombe in the flesh – and with a greater stability and physical agility than one suspects from the small screen. She has a sure knack of delivering the most unlikely lines as if they were expected wattle for her broad, and often coarse, Northern accent, though she could not hide the incoherence of a script which made repeated reference to her role as a retired actress in a play which depends on stereotypes, she did not sound like your stock ex-lady-of-the-boards. It was a poem which seemed to me so peripheral to the plot as to be best omitted.

For the act. As long as there was a strong vocal attack to propel the plot forward, then laughter occurred and suspension of disbelief created at will. However, the moment voices lost vigour, the pace and our interest let up, and it took the outrageous concentration of Sir Saggan or Myra Nabel's study to maintain imperturbance to restore confidence. It is the mark of the technical genius of these two ladies that they were able to do so.

Technical certainty. I found disappearing scenes on Stage Company's holiday contribution to *The Signet*. Perhaps it was a case of overconfidence, having done the rounds of SA and the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Rob George's *Arms/Arms: Great Big Adventure Book*. For Ben was close to reaching up to 10th performance. On the evidence presented in this review season, I found it difficult to understand how it had come this far.

It is pure irony, blessed with a gift of a title to reach ever so little at the heart-strings of anyone who thrilled as a child to the words "adventure book". Couple that with the romantic take himself and your audience is spotting for the delicious self-indulgence of a trip down nostalgia lane. What can go wrong?

These two words again. Technical certainty. Some depth of character was not the aim, the playing had to be funny, fast and slick enough to obviolate the need for it. Around the constant figure of Lord and his misrep but dull would-be biographer, Lord Tudor, their revolve thirty or so characters played by live actors. Dan Barker is a past master of the living cartoon, and Rob George himself proved a dab hand at rapid personality change. But the rehearsal hall's can-do attitude is questionable where their many roles blurred and with them the story. Andrew Clarke looked and behaved like a believable Flynn, but suffered along with Nina Landis (Lord Tudor) from over-exposure as a two-dimensional character, so that his final moment of truth – going actor-regret – slipped unconvincingly into sentimentality.

After the enactment of *Plot Struck*, I found the drop-out at times surprisingly vague. Some translations were clumsy with the final punch-line often buried by an

awkward cut, and lighting could have done more to give focus to the wide stage area. Choreography was ordinary, while the downright quality of most of David Schoff's music did not provide enough of a contrast with the stage mood.

As worn it was dull and run of the mill, at best, light-hearted fun. But isn't a time both Rob George and Steve Square moved on from the revue form that nurtured them and began to push beyond superficiality to

something more lasting? Both have touched on themes which could take a deal of exploration in depth, both have made decisions deliberately to enter on the surface. It has become something of a cliché lately to take a famous person and build a play around that. But a good play will stand wherever the name of the protagonist. In this case, call Fred Flynn John Smith and I wonder how successful his *Adventure Book* would be.



Andrew Clarke in *Great Big Adventure Book* (Photo: Jan Dahman)

THEATRE/VIC



State Rep/Suzanne Spurrer

Depth and potential

REK KETT SEASON

By Colin Duckworth

Enchanted Forest: And A Krapp's Last Days By Samuel Beckett. La Marmara Theatre Melbourne. Via Operetta 14 January 1988.
Director: Jean-Pierre Mignion. Music and sound design: Andrew Bell.
Actors: Bruce Keller, Marilyn O'Donnell.
Apostrophically

To begin this evening with Beckett's with a piece written for radio was asking for trouble as whatever Beckett does is perfectly conceived for the medium he chooses for it. However, *Enchanted Forest*, by Kerner, Beckett's most difficult work, was in fact enhanced by the powerful physical presence of Bruce Keller.

Admittedly some of the effects were missing, or distorted. Heavy clamping down the stairs and across the corridor in squally boots did not give the impression of shingle on the beach. Having Ada's voice coming from the mouth of Marilyn O'Donnell just behind one's head, loud and clear, did not render the "low, remote voice" of the Ada within Henry's head. But even though the constant interplay between illusion and reality implied in the text, and in better radio versions than the BBC's in 1959, once could not be maintained on stage. Keller's grim, grotesque, gardenic and clear-spoken performance took us completely, and led us to look forward with confidence to his Krapp. Andrew Bell's sound design, so vital to the creation of atmosphere, was distorted and perhaps the muffled electronic-organ arpeggios family

resembling, and yet "he unlike the sound of the sea", the unloved, unwanted child's unconquering galling on the broken down piano: all part of the haunting to which the mind of this old man, exiled in solitude, is prone.

The stage was then littered with rubbish for a truncated version of what might have been better called *Shore of Despair*, grass, herbs, groans. Where was the newborn baby's cry? Without it this thirty-second contemplation of the life-cycle makes no sense. The sweeping-up after was more rewarding to watch.

Nat began well. One eventually tracked down the source of the voice muttering, accompanied apparently a couple of feet from the design was the minutely-ajudged Mouth. But from that point on, the performance

by any spectator who did not know the text.

With Bruce Keller's Krapp we were back on solid ground. Keller had made the sacrifice of his hair — necessarily at such short notice — thus giving his 69-year old decrepit a startling realism. His voice matched, contrasting well with that of the 36-year old Krapp on tape. He introduced some rare initial gaps (expressed hanging of head on limp, symbolic gesture of social impotence with lowered head, mouth full of barbs).

Building up his portrait of some, violent, frustrated rejection of nostalgia for his flagged pursuit of happiness, Keller drew both laughter and compassion from this confrontation of present age and past



Bruce Keller as Krapp in *La Marmara Theatre: Enchanted Forest*

had little to do with what is contained in this fifteen-minute extended image encompassing a lifetime of anguished suffering. It is an old woman's throat, Marilyn O'Donnell's young, bright, chirpy voice was not able to cope yet with the manner, tension and dramatic logic of this piece. The clarity of the singing voice made it difficult to place the Auditor in a position from which his tension and "gesture of compassion" could be derived.

youth. The contrast between his myopic, catarracted eyes of the now, and the occasional glazed-over gaze recalling the then ("The face she had! The eyes! Ah well...") revealed an actor capable of real depth and potential.

With two full-lengths out of four shows, Jean-Pierre Mignion should be encouraged that his French training and ten years' work in European theatres is beginning to bear fruit here.

Sheer caviar

THE OLD COUNTRY

By Raymond Stanley

The Old Country by Ann Brown. Music by James Macmillan. Production by the Australian Shakespeare Theatre Trust. The O'Shull Organisation and Philip Emanuel Productions presentation. Comedy Theatre Melbourne. For Opening 17 February 1980.

Executive producers: Helen Morley, Devlin. Editor: Lesley Douglas. James Redwood, Lighting. Walter Van Nieuwenhuyk. Cast: Hilary Robert Morley, Bron Morgan, Eric Robert Van Mookenberg, Olga Louisa Pope, Duff McKelvie, Victoria Barbara Welch. (Production)

Here is a play every intelligent theatregoer appreciating good thought-provoking theatre should rush to see. It is sheer caviar.

Admittedly, it is not easy to follow; it requires one's absolute concentration and memory of what has previously been said or missed. For full appreciation awareness is needed of people, places and things briefly referred to. And some of the references cannot be very familiar to Australian ears. But author Bennett never labours at any point and if one is not quick to grasp it at first hearing, a second reading is likely to be needed later.

All seems veiled in mystery. Elderly Hilary lives with wife Rita in a book-cluttered ramshackle wooden place surrounded by trees. Where? There are

references to Scotland, but not until Hilary's complaint is well into the film act. "Of course the service is bad here. But there's always been. Apparently one wanted an age in a restaurant even under the Tsars. Nothing has changed" — a Russian specified as the source.

The couple are visited by young Eric and his wife Olga. Eric, a doctor, is a dreamshipman from Portsmouth Dockyard, his wife speaks with a slight accent. When the pair have left, Hilary remarks that he, Eric and Olga have nothing in common at all. "Except the one thing — you're all transsex," says Bron. This another clue is dropped.

Soon there arrive upon the scene Hilary's sister, Veronica, and her newly-knighted husband, Duff, who seems to be very influential and sets on various arts boards. It appears the two pairs are meeting for the first time in fourteen years.

Apparently Duff's mission in coming to Russia is to persuade Hilary to return to England; he suggests a publisher could be interested in his memoirs. Olga it seems is in league with Duff to return his brother-in-law somehow to England. "The British have someone we want," she says. "We have no one they especially want, but you will do."

Hilary is apathetic about going. Bron tells us it is Eric who would like to return (he once apparently had a one-night stand with Duff), but he is who remains on at the end.

There is little plot, but much talk. The dialogue is very rich and always worth listening to, scattered with jewels of wit.

Frequently one is reminded of T S Eliot, and it would seem Bennett has been influenced by the plays of John Whiting, Charles Morgan and Harold Pinter. And because of the setting — there is an overall feeling of Chekhov.

Robert Morley makes the role of Hilary seem rather-made. His weary way has fallen from his lips as naturally as if they were his own words delivered during an interview, asked and dictated by ironic sources, raising of eyebrows and some of the ridiculous. After seeing Morley in the part, it is impossible to imagine Hilary being played by any other actor — and certainly not Alec Guinness, who created the role in London.

British Welch seems just right for Veronica. Her entrance on stage is like a mild explosion and brightness up everything around. She pours every line to maximum effect in her unique throaty voice.

With Margie Lee, looking every inch the faded wife, Bron, one sometimes has difficulty hearing ends of sentences. Fine as her performance is, one still feels there are more depths of her role to be plumbed.

A strange unrecognisable accent seems to hamper Robert Van Mookenberg's playing of Eric, but as Olga Louisa Pope is spot on.

Robert Lowrey has done a great job of directing skilfully moving characters around in some very static situations. Occasionally though — on the first night at least — are some bad markings.

And James Redwood's set is really outstanding.



Hilary, Rita, Bron, Duff and Hilary in *The Old Country*. Photo: David Parker

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Miracle of logical exploitation

JUDGEMENT

By Cathy Peake

Judgement by Barry Collier. Hampel, Upton, Melbourne, Vic. Dated 24 January 1988.
Director: William Clark. Designer: Robert Robert.
Costume: Wendy Kukulinski.
Cast: Andrew Vukobrat, Malcolm Robertson.
(Professional)

"Only a party to a case can really judge, but being a party, it cannot judge. Hence there is no possibility of judgement in this world, but only the promise of a possibility."

Judgement by English writer, Barry Collier, sits firmly within the terms of Kafka's paradox. His play is a fictionalised account of an incident in Southern Poland during the Second World War — an incident that George Sorensen refers to in his *Death of Tragedy*.

Its broad details are as follows. A group of Russian officers were captured by the German Army and imprisoned in a deserted monastery without clothes, food or water. Two months later, the advancing Red Army discovered the two survivors — brothers, one of whom was decorated by their survival through cannibalism, the other having retained his sanity.

After their release, they were given a decent meal and then shot. "Yet the soldiers are to what degree on their former officers had been reduced?" Sorensen.

The play is written in the form of a dramatic monologue, and is spoken by the single sane survivor. A deeply harrowing piece, its dramatic form turns with great focus on the moral ambiguity of Vukobrat's sanity. The "judgement" he seeks is a judgement about his own complicity, and his unswerving ability to present an articulate and logical account of the ordeal. As he says: "My own state of mind is my accuser."

The theatre is set up in a courtyard before which Vukobrat stands virtually motionless, clad in white and with his hands behind his back. Beside him is a small deal table on which rests a sharpened human thigh bone — his "stolen witness", and later identified as belonging to the remains of Officer Lubarsko.

Vukobrat asks "Am I not the logical usage? Am I not a visitor returned from the last frontier? And the ensuing monologue is brilliantly tailored to the exploitation of his force moral dilemma.

The real strength of this script lies with its refusal to allow the whole barbarous experience to degenerate into historical and "voodoo". Vukobrat's dual crime — to have survived through cannibalism, and to have survived sane is dealt with a

control and a sensitivity that is quite astonishing. Inevitably, the play runs under aspects of morality and "judgement".

Have we created a world in which survival depends upon strategies so barbarous and so inhuman that it makes nonsense to talk of a moral order? There is no answer to this question however, for as Vukobrat insists: "My problem is with the facts. Yours is with the interpretation of the facts".

Malcolm Robertson brings a formidable calm of energy and concentration to his character. The images he creates over the space of two hours are drawn with an economy and an intelligence that is spare, and utterly unforgettable.

Using only his voice, he explores the possibilities of reported speech to the utmost, teasing out the contradictions and the tensions of Vukobrat's inner life and finding a high precision and clarity for precisely that material which alienates and repulses his fellow men.

Robertson, and director William Guth work within tight limits, and never lose sight of the fine rational lines which hold Vukobrat's nightmare together. In the end, it is his miracle of logical exploitation, and of accountability which triumphs. On opening night, they were rewarded. There was no applause, and when the lights went down the audience were just left stranded in their seats.



Malcolm Robertson in "Judgement" Photo: Jeff Smith

THEATRE/WA



State Rep./Joan Ambrose

Intelligent, entertaining

GARDEN PARTY

By Margo Luke

Garden Party, by Edgar Metcalfe, The Walk-in to Walk Theatre, Perth WA, opened 2nd January, 1988. Director: Raymond Gander. Designer: Bill David. Cost: Edward Stankovic. Scenery: Ben Raymond. Sound: Wilfrid Webb. Music: Norman. Props: Tonia. Light: Sally. In role: Margaret Ford, Kate Stone, Carolyn, Phillip, Edgar Metcalfe, Maude, Rosemary, Joan Sydney, Nicholas, Michael, Ian, Sebastian, Tony. Production: Vic Hawkins. (Professional)

Edgar Metcalfe, long a dominating force in Perth Theatre, has created a new phase. As an actor and director he has been sporadically showered with praise, awards and admiration. As a writer, he has been known for lightweight entertainment-reviews and pantomime scripts of more than average wit have punctuated many end-of-year festivities. Although he is the author of three "straight" plays which have been produced in Britain, *Garden Party* is our first introduction to Metcalfe the Actual Playwright.

Well before the first night the grapes are laid prepared the cognoscents that the play would be full of recognizable figures from the arts and academics, and provide a lively group game of "name the original".

What is laid emerges is a very funny, and perceptive study (thoroughly unfashionable in its matterly construction) of universally recognizable types with a certain local colouring. Each capital city of Australia (and for that matter their provincial counterparts in Britain) has its dragon-lady who collects

ambitious and pliable young men to act as emotional props and cheap domestic labour; its bohemian senior academics who tell aggressively tasteless jokes and humiliate other vulnerable young women; its den academic women, its heart-of-gold earth-mother types - need one guess? Except that Metcalfe, contrary to the current fashion of making them denser than life has made them more articulate, funnier or bricker, as relevant. One is reminded at times of Coward, at other times of Ayckbourn. This does not imply that the play is derivative or imitative, but rather shows a hint at the company of its peers.

Ray Gander's production is an unqualified success. A strong cast moves smoothly through Bill David's uncluttered set, which has the right touch of Perth "older suburb" elegance with graceful plants and house. Pacing and mood-setting is subtle: the play's balance of serious social observation and hilarious comedy of manners depends on a sure feeling for the contrasts and rhythms, and the role players each of them an interesting character-study, are allowed their own turns and to contribute to the total tableau of the not-un-benighted people as play.

Within the deceptively simple

of Australian gastronomes by the deliciously camp French restaurateur, played with relish and gay abandon by Metcalfe himself.

If the wit of the dialogue is the dominating quality of the play, the serious undertone, especially as developed in the second act, makes their impression. There are excellent confrontations involving jaded marriage-partners and ex-lovers. Nicole Tade stands out in a string of obnoxious moods, from seligness to hearty amoros to patricially disdain. Margaret Ford as tamely-obtuse and seductively tacit, Merrin Canning gives a fine picture of a sensitive young woman coping with a complex social and emotional situation, and Joan Sydney plots a subtle course from seemingly indefensible chameleon to defined despair.

Rosemary Barr, plays the hostess who gives the *Garden Party*, sketched in pure stoned, and one thoroughly enjoys the moment of her final come-appearance when the young man, Raymond, played with amiable restraint by Gerald Hetherwick, finally leaves her. Mark van Schoor plays a young Greek student with class and foreign courtesy, and Vic Hawkins as a television



Vic Hawkins and Nicole Tade in *Garden Party*. Photo: Jodi McConnell

framework of a Sunday garden party characters are introduced and revealed relationships form and tumble, and a way of life is portrayed with mocking accuracy.

Metcalfe has a fine ear for the social nuances implied by trivia. The only echoes of his semi-dead academics wife are spotted on, as are the gloriously bechy swipes

sneakies, projects a sensibly convincing quality of wit and glamour.

The whole thing is enormously intelligent, perceptive, and thoroughly entertaining, and one hopes that despite the handbags of critical fashion and Australian geography, the play will make its way beyond the tree-lined suburbs of Perth.

OPERA

WA Opera fracas

By Leslie Anderson

Whether it's eagerness to all performing arts companies or just a desire not to be upstaged by the big boys, Western Australia has had its own behind-the-scenes drama in the music world. While not attracting national publicity nor involving international names the battle has satisfied genuine music lovers in this State.

In November the Western Australian Opera Company had just finished a five night sell-out season at the Perth Concert Hall. There was a pagentry about the final hours of musical director Alan Abbott and tenor Gerald Stern. Their bows were definitely final. Mr Abbott's contract with the company was not to be renewed. This also meant the end of his three-year association with the WA Arts Orchestra. Mr Stern's contract has also expired.

There was an irony in the success of *Madame Butterfly* which is in the late 19th century grand opera tradition.

When a confidential review commissioned by the Western Australian Arts Council found its way into the daily press the Opera Company was publicly chastised for being too ambitious. In the *huffalo* following the leaking of a review into opera and music theatre in WA it was alleged that the company had used the council report as a excuse to get rid of Alan Abbott.

This is vehemently denied by the general manager of the Opera Company, Mr Yim Warriner, variously described as 'the best opera administrator in the country' or 'the saviour'. He has insisted that the funding for the company is so precarious it is in no position to offer long-term contracts to anybody. Mr Gerald Krug has been offered and has accepted a five-month contract.

Mr Warriner has said that short-term contracts are unsatisfactory artistically but existing funding arrangements rule out long-term contracts. He makes no secret of his bitterness about the opera and music theatre review undertaken by the committee of inquiry set up by the Arts Council.

"The majority of the report was that it was presented as a fat apple," he said. "The recommendations were put forward without the company being given a chance to refute allegations or discuss proposed



Derek Holroyde, Dean of Arts at WAFI

solutions. There have been subsequent discussions but it was an absolute denial of democracy.

"The Council gets quarterly reports and financial statements from the Company. They were never questioned. I find it a remarkable situation that a report could be brought down by a supposedly reputable body of people without the major company under scrutiny being asked for explanations. Whoever leaked that report to the press was no friend of opera in this State."

If Mr Warriner's reaction was bitter, the reaction of the sitting council chairman, Professor Frank Callaway, was concurred.

The review was published while he was abroad. Among other things it said:

- The Opera Company had attempted an over-ambitious range of productions
- The Company had failed to follow a consistent artistic policy and had too readily accepted that subsidies should make up for deficiencies.
- Standards of professionalism did not match up to standards being obtained elsewhere
- WA is not yet in a position to maintain a full-time professional opera company capable of providing full-time employment
- Professional and amateur groups should co-operate more
- An association should be established between the WA Opera Company and the State Opera Company of South Australia

The dust was still settling from this storm when the news broke that Alan Abbott's contract was not being renewed. Meanwhile, in the absence of Professor

Callaway, the acting chairman of the Arts Council, Mrs Linda Underwood, released a press statement denying claims that the review into opera and music theatre had set out to undermine the work of the Opera Company. The Council reaffirmed its support for opera and music theatre within the State and that its terms appropriate to local circumstances and resources.

Mrs Underwood said the review had been prepared, in part, by the Opera Company's request for an additional \$75,000 above its 1989 grant of \$172,000 from the Arts Council and a grant of \$40,000 from the Australia Council. The grant is the second largest grant awarded by the Arts Council in WA.

Professor Callaway, on his return, set about soothing ruffled feathers with all the aplomb of a Sally Rand. (Experienced hair driers, at times, have to protect both their front and their rear simultaneously.) He endorsed Mrs Underwood's press statement and the words "accountability", "public money" and "responsibility" were used.

The composition of inquiry comprised Mr Derek Holroyde, Dean of the School of Arts and Design at the WA Institute of Technology, Mrs Judy Reynolds, honorary director of the Avon Valley Arts Society, Miss Elizabeth Swearing, former general manager of the English Opera Group and director of the graduate diploma course in arts administration at the South Australian Institute of Technology and Mr David Richardson of Perth, a partner in Cooper and Lybrand Services who studied the operation of the Australian Opera.

Mr Holroyde and Mrs Reynolds are members of the WA Arts Council. The committee was set up in March last year and called for submissions from the public. More than one hundred submissions were received and a report was presented to the Arts Council in July.

One could not question the courage of the committee. One should not question their integrity and goodwill for opera and music theatre in WA. But one could and should question the wisdom of Arts Council involvement in a review which, whatever its intention, acted as an indictment of WA's leading musical organisation.

Perth's performing arts community is a small one with the usual猜忌 and jockeying for position. This kind of breakdown we have been witnessing only confirms the suspicions of politicians and public that art is a luxury, elitist area unworthy of the tax dollar.

THEATRE

SAVE THE WARNER THEATRE

Dear Sir,

The committee of The Association of Community Theatres protests in the strongest possible terms at the Commonwealth Bank's proposed demolition of the Warner Theatre.

Bank for live theatre in 1856 it has been in continuous use since that time and is one of the oldest surviving theatre buildings in the country.

Australia's cultural heritage has been too often vandalised in the name of commerce. We call upon the Commonwealth Bank to preserve this theatre for posterity.

In other cities of Australia public buildings of beauty and importance to our heritage have been preserved through public outcry at their proposed destruction. The State Theatre in Sydney has been threatened but still stands. The Regent Theatre in Brisbane still stands despite many threats. Adelaide citizens remember with horror what happened to the Theatre Royal. Please do not let this

happen to the Warner.

Public outcry will surely force one of Australia's largest financial institutions to reconsider and incorporate the theatre within the new building design. Theatre people and conservationists in other Australian cities have rallied before and stopped short-sighted demolition of a part of their city's history. Do Adelaide people care less?

Remember Edmund Wright House and let's get off our collective backsides and tell the bank that we won't allow the destruction of yet another of Adelaide's historic landmarks. If the Commonwealth Bank will not reconsider may we suggest that theatre people, theatre companies, and concerned individuals consider where they bank and why.

For the committee of The Association of Community Theatres

Edwin Reif (ACT Administrator),
Adelaide SA

AN OPEN LETTER TO MONAHAN DAYMAN ADAMS

Dear Messrs Hutchinson and Adams

We are disappointed that your Open Letter to the Theatre Board in February makes no reference to the explanation with respect to La Mama already given to you in our letter of 7 January 1980.

The simple facts are that La Mama, when applying to the Theatre Board in September, advised:

"We will be submitting the same budget to the Victorian Ministry for the Arts."

Unfortunately when the Theatre Board met to consider La Mama's application on 28-30 November 1979, La Mama had still not submitted its application to the Victorian Ministry. The Theatre Board, therefore, made an interim grant to ensure that there would be no interruption in the activities of La Mama, and deferred to its March meeting a final decision on the total grant for 1980.

All your queries about motives and perversity seem to ignore the facts. The Theatre Board regards La Mama with

many of the same sentiments expressed in your letter, and hopes that the important traditions of this theatre space will continue.

Yours sincerely

Bob Adams

Director

Theatre Board

POOR QUALITY PETER PAN

Dear Sir,

Recently I took my young niece to see Robina Board's production of *Peter Pan* at the Comedy Theatre in Melbourne. I was annoyed at having to pay \$4.00 for a two-year old child and \$6.50 for myself, a student. However, I paid the money in the belief that the performance would be enjoyable and of reasonable standard, which is surely what one is entitled to expect at these prices.

Not so, however. I was appalled at the whole production. Perhaps with the exception of Hugh Monroe (*Peter Pan*) there was a complete lack of energy and enthusiasm generated by either the adult or child actors, the direction was terrible and the talent was noticeable only by its acute absence. Small wonder that we could tolerate it no longer than interval. One does not need to be a connoisseur of the theatre to realise just how bad this production was.

In amongst all that it even ran the length of its scheduled season, ripping off the public with a poor quality performance which would perhaps be just passable in a high school auditorium is not my idea of successful theatre.

Perhaps it is just that the Melbourne public, children in particular, are starved of family theatrical entertainment that it will unconsciously digest any amount of crap it is served up. There is ample evidence of the superb talent that abounds in this state, not to mention the rest of the country. One would wonder why better use is not being made of our excellent resources.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Vernon,
Mooneebellie, Vic.

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BOOKS



By John McCullum

Calm before the storm?

After The Doll by Peter Fitzpatrick
Edward Arnold, 1979
Makassar Reef by Alexander Buro
Curraway Press, 1979
Moughn 4 1979

I have before me this month two autographs of the present state of Australian theatre and drama, both of which find that, in the words of one, "the mood at the moment is one of uneasiness". Both are motivated by more than a turn-of-the-decade desire to sum up. Peter Fitzpatrick, in *After The Doll*, studies the last twenty-five years of Australian playwriting and concludes that we are in many ways still concerned with the same old debates — that in spite of the tremendous consolidation and maturation, particularly in the last twelve years, the central interest and limiting assumptions of our drama have barely changed. Jack Hibberd, in an article, "Proseman Arch Blair", in a recent *Messenger* considers that the changes and innovations of the last decade have been happily assimilated into the theatrical status quo, but that in all, the established theatre itself has not subsequently developed. Barry Dickins, in the same issue, provides a striking example of the truth of this conclusion.

I also have before me, however, the Curraway Press edition of Alex Buro's superb play *Makassar Reef*, which at least shows that we are in a great place to be beleaguered but which also answers Peter Fitzpatrick's reservations about new developments in Australian playwriting. I

have always been a great admirer of Buro's work (as have many other people, in spite of a few cynics) and I find it difficult to understand the near critical response *Makassar Reef* had.

Contrary to what many people seem to assume, Buro is not a failed naturalistic writer, whose love of wit and style interferes with his characterisation, and whose use of specific social settings implies a special attempt to debunk Australian social norms. In a highly entertaining way (as even his detractors acknowledge) he uses familiar genres and his own speaking line in wit and verbal dexterity to explore

finding existentially trivial ideas with which to do so.

Aside from this particular argument with it, *After The Doll* is still a very useful and sensitive account of an subject it does not overcome all the problems of writing a fully integrated social and literary history of drama — no work could — but it is interesting and provocative about the richest period of Australian drama. As is inevitable in a work with a literary rather than a theatrical approach, it places a great deal of emphasis on language. I am not altogether convinced by the argument that recent plays have in a special way been about language itself, but it is a sign of the book's worth that one is able to respond continuously and warmly to its arguments.

Jack Hibberd's argument, contained in a short, allusive article, is much more bluntly put, but no less provocative for that. The difficulty for me about it is that I believe him to be completely right — that much current Australian theatre is completely directionless, institutionalised and that its concerns lie outside the general social and cultural life of the communities in which they are pursued. And yet it is so tempting to point to the transformations we do get from the theatre, and say that if we have such plays as *Fission*, *The Man From MacGowan* and *Makassar Reef* (and indeed *The Chevrolet*) then things can't be too bad. For this is perhaps the whole trouble — that justified enthusiasm for what we know turns too easily into complacency.

Theatrical Hibberd's prescription includes what he calls polycentric theatre in a range of small community theatres "with their own personalities and rationales" — a "theatre republic". This sort of theatrical decentralisation is of first importance if we are to break the monopolies of the existing large theatre organisations and the "curse-placed Londoners". I gather that the start of this is beginning to happen in Victoria in NSW. Anne Neume took over as Artistic Director of the Hunter Valley Theatre Company in Newcastle, and announced that Newcastle should theatrically become more than a satellite of Sydney. Barry Dickins writes in *Messenger*, that his artistic roots are in Rozelle. I think that is a theatre scene which can encompass the huge, but largely different talents of Barry Dickins and Alex Buro has got something going for it, but certainly when we have rediscovered the human, social and sensual "horror" of theatre and when, like Eugene Ionesco, we can better these motives with each other, then we will have a much more exciting theatrical life.



quite profoundly the quiet desperation of his leading characters.

These characters, like Caroline Lambdown, Edward Marullo, Wanda Brown, Beth Flaxwood and Wendy Quinn, are in these different ways caught up in sophisticated moral dilemmas as they try to find ways of not hurting each other, of finding stability in their relationships with each other, and of reconciling these moral dilemmas with their own needs and wishes. This is actually a complicated business, and Buro is a no-nonsense moralist, so the plays demand great concentration. That concentration is assisted by the witty and entertaining form, although some critics claim to find that they can't see past the surface brilliance. (The problem is sometimes exacerbated by insensitive production, in Sydney at least.)

It is this formally precise and complex treatment of deeply human problems which seems to help Peter Fitzpatrick's guarded optimism. Buro at least has moved well beyond the old debates of representing Australians as themselves and

ACT THEATRE

ALPHA THEATRE

ANU Arts Centre: *Life Froms* by Alan McKay. 3 one-act Australian plays. 12-15 March

AUSTRALIAN THEATRE WORKSHOP

Children Street Hall: *The Glad Hand* by Saeed Nelson, director. Warwick Baxter March 12-20

John Wilson's *Phantom*, upper show March 12-20

CANBERRA REPERTORY (47 4222)
Theatre Three: Joseph Conrad *Gom* Adapted by Daniel Alford, director, Ken Boulder. To March 13

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)
La Cloc paggett. *Mare of Menne* March 24, 25

EDDIE THEATRE COMPANY
Playhouse (49 4488)

Adapt by David Radkin. To March 5
Canberra Theatre Centre. Luncheon performances from March 17 for six weeks

PI AYHOUSE (49 4488)
Under Southern Regional Theatre
Canberra by Jill Sauer. March 4-8
REID HOUSE THEATRE
WORKSHOP (47 6081)

School performances: *Me Jack You Job* and performances in the park, during Canberra week. Adelaide Festival. *Me Jack You Job* and *Yenda*. More Community show being developed with John Rowland, writer in residence, stage March

DANCE

ANU ARTS CENTRE (49 4787)

The Hermin Vinter dance company in repitine with Dan Gifford, choreographer Workshops

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)
Boris Ballo of the Komische Oper. *Seas, Lake and three short ballets*. Maye To April 1

PLAYHOUSE (49 4488)
College Music Theatre. March 14

OPERA

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)
Australian Opera. *Carl of the Golden Horn* and *Don Galliano*. March 1-14

CONCERTS

ANU ARTS CENTRE (49 4787)
Bert Jansch in concert. March 20

CANBERRA THEATRE (49 8211)
John Williams and Sky. March 20

SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Canberra Symphony Orchestra. Gold Series March 5
Canberra Symphony Orchestra. Green series March 6
Chamber Music Society first concert March 8

Canberra Orchestra. Mozart Festival concert. March 12

Landscape concerts. March 14, 21
Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra. March 28

Chamber Music Society second concert March 29

UNIVERSITY HOUSE
Michael Gallo, violoncello. March 16

For further contact. *Life Nelson* on 49 3117

NSW THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW SOUTH WALES (357 8811)

School Tours: *The Australian world of maps for infants and primaries*. South Coast until March 28

Phantom, drama for infants and primary, Central and Far West throughout March
Me Jack You Job children's play for infants and primary, Riverina until March 28

Yenda Maye music show for infants, primary and secondary, North Coast and Hunter until March 28

The Octaves, folk music for infants, primary and secondary North West and Hunter until March 28

Songways, a circumlocution musical ensemble for infants primary and secondary metropolitan areas from March 17

Adult Tours: *Reviews* by Roger Hall, directed by Don Mackay with Paul Barr, Anna Pheasant and Peter Cummins. Statewide from March 17

COURT HOUSE HOTEL (964 8262)
Oxford Street. Taylor Square

Golden in Ode by Robert and David Landberry, directed by Malcolm Freivald, music by Gary Smith with Susan Aspinall, Steven Seals and Kurt Jenson. Throughout March

ENSEMBLE THEATRE (924 8877)
Was Me America? by N F Simpson

director. Max Phipps, with Lucy Charles Magge. Denon, Jon Irving, Hilary

Larkum, Brownie Phipps, Charlie Strahan and Greg Radford. Throughout March

FIRST STAGE THEATRE COMPANY (82 1803)

The History of Theatre in Dreamer Form by Gary Baxter, directed by Chris Lewis, with Angela Brann, Danna Corrigan and Gary Baxter. Touring to schools throughout March

FRANK STRAIN'S BULL NUBUSH THEATRE RESTAURANT (357 4627)

That's Australia musical review from the turn of the century to today, with Noel Brophy, Barbara Wyndon, Garth Meade, Neil Bryant and Helen Lomen. directed by George Gordon. Throughout March
GENESIAN THEATRE (35 8441)

The Deep Blue Sea by Terence Rattigan, directed by Mervyn Frew. Commercial March 15

HER MAJESTY 8 THEATRE (212 3411)
Find The Lady by Michael Perron

directed by Stuart Gordon, with Mollie Sugden, Gordon Pash, Andrew Lorty and Myra Nelson. Commercial. Hagan 13
KIRKILL PUB THEATRE (92 4414)

Kirribilli Hotel. *Michael's Point*

The 1688 Shopping P.P. Company, directed by Raymond Young, music by Adrian Morgan, with Danny Adcock, Margo McVicar, Peter Corbett, Ross Holman and Laura Gohard

LES CURRIE PRESENTATIONS (336 2676)

Madon Moore Daria programme of classical plays directed by Michael Franklin for infants, primary and secondary. Sydney metropolitan area March 8

Colony a programme of folk songs and dances describing colonial Australia devised and performed by Colin Douglas and Tony Sator. folk music, primary and secondary. NSW country throughout March

MARIAN STREET THEATRE (496 1164)

Closed for renovations

MARIONETTE THEATRE OF AUSTRALIA (2 0848)

Recording Hall, S.O.H.

Copper Lode and the Eastland and Copper written by Patrick Cook and directed by Richard Bradshaw with music by Robyn Archer. Commences March 19

MUSIC BALL THEATRE RESTAURANT (929 8223)

East Lode by Mrs Henry Wood, directed by Allan Harvey with Allan Harvey, Bernadette Houghton, Mel Carmichael and Christine Cameron. Throughout March
MUSIC LOFT THEATRE (477 6583)

Caught in The Air, a variety review produced by William Orr with Queens Park-Darryl Swann, Mike Parker and Peter McGowan. Throughout March
NEW THEATRE (514 3401)

Brown Pelican by George Skian. directed by Ray Nichols. Throughout March

NIMROD THEATRE (069 5605)

Uptown Buddha's House by Thomas Kinsella, directed by Rob Horler, with Arthur Compston, Justine Saunders, Bob Mera, Kevin Smith, John Reed, Bill Conn, Maria Harris and Philip Lenkey. Until March 2.

The House Of The Dead Men by John Anthony King, directed by John Bell, with Paul Bertram, Vivienne Garrett, Joseph First, Kerry Walker and Anna Vozika. Commences March 12.

Downstairs: Trancers by Steven Sewell, directed by Neil Armistead, with Neil MacLachlan, Colin Friele, Judy Miller, Nicholas Fawcett, Max Gilchrist and Barry Otto. Until March 21.

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF

(071 1264)

The "Shaw" Awards for primary schools and *Actress Special: Louisa* from March for secondary schools, both directed by Jane Watson, with Nola Cobble, David London, Colin Allen, Bryan Jones and Rosemary Leno. Metropolitan area throughout March.

PLAYERS THEATRE COMPANY (06 3359915)

Swiss Mr. Mosker Duden Touch Me by Peter Barry and John Mulgrew, directed by Peter Barry, with Liz Harris, Karen Jackson and John Mulgrew. Throughout March.

Q THEATRE (067 21 3335)

Alfons Fromm by Alan Ayckbourn, Penrith from March 1, Orange from March 12 and Murrumbidgee from March 21. **QUEENSLAND TRUCKING COMPANY (066 22 2052)**

Contact theatre for details.

THE ROCKS PLAYERS

(660 6294 6205)

153 Glick Point Rd, Glick

A Midsummer Night's Dream by William Shakespeare, directed by Bill Pepper. Commences March 12.

SEYMOUR CENTRE (069 5533)

The Lovers of Josef presented by Theatre des Jeunes Amies from March 10 to 15. *The Gift* presented by The Golem Home Theatre with Miles Skelton. 15 March 16 and 17.

SHOPFRONT THEATRE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE (068 9448)

Five drama workshops on weekends. Includes playbuilding, mime, dance, puppetry, design, radio and video. *Children and The Rule of Law* touring schools and at Shopfront Theatre until March 15.

The Trenches Play directed by Dan Mason at the Theatre from March 21 to 29. Shopfront Cinema touring country areas throughout March.

SPEAKEASY THEATRE

RESTAURANT (662 7443)

Play's Showbiz produced/directed by Alan Lane, with Alan Lane, Dione Murray, Peter Noble, and Susan Joyce. Throughout March.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (2 4548)

Dressed Like an Egg presented by Mabele Mahe from March 23 to 29.

Archie Through Four Decades presented by Gisela May on March 8.

Most of Memo presented by La Cinq from March 9 to 8.

SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

(2 0585)

Drama Theatre, S.O.H.

Close of Play by Simon Gray, directed by Rodney Fisher, with Keith Cuckfield and Frank Thring. Until March 22.

THEATRE ROYAL (066 4111)

Cong Russell and Company. Until March 8.

The Old Country by Alan Bennett, directed by Robin Lacey, with Robert Morley, Patricia Welch, Willis Esely, Margo Lee, Robert van Marckenberg and Louise Page. Commences March 15.

OPERA

THE AUSTRALIAN OPERA (2 0585)

Sydney Opera House

The Magic Flute by Mozart, conducted by Richard Bonynge and produced by John Eapley.

Nabucco by Verdi, conducted by Geoffrey Arnold and produced by Tim Ligwood. March 1.

DANCE

THE AUSTRALIAN BALLET (2 0586)

Sydney Opera House

Programme 1 - *Symphonic* in C choreography George Balanchine, music Georges Bizet, *Schubert's* choreography Mikhail Lifshitz, music Nicola Rumsby-Karmitz, and *Graduation Ball* choreography David Lichstein, music Jeffrey Strauss. Commences March 21.

SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE (2 0585)

Prague Chamber Ballet. March 10 to 15.

CONCERTS

HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE (012 3411)

Peter Allen until March 1.

REGENT THEATRE (61 4967)

Max Bygraves from March 20 to 21.

HORDERN PAVILION (33 3799)

Flowerwood Mac. March 15 and 16.

For entries contact Carole Long on 337 1380/669 3970.

QLD

THEATRE

ARTS THEATRE (36 1344)

Happy Family by Gino Cozzani, director, Dorothy Bucknell, designer, Peter Erdmann. Feb 14 - March 22. **BRISBANE ACTORS COMPANY (369 1879)**

For details phone the company.

HER MAJESTY'S (32 1379/1)

The Old Country by Alan Bennett, producer, Wilton Morley, director, Robin Lacey, Designer James Ridewood, with Robert Morley. March 4-15.

LA ROUTE (36 1622)

John F. Doe by Stephen Mearns, director, Nicky Bracknell. To 29 March. *Scrap on the Streets* by Doreen Clark, director, Malcolm Skellock.

POPULAR THEATRE TROUPE (06 1745)

On tour

QUEENSLAND THEATRE

COMPANY (228 3015)

Gray by Simon and Stephen, director, John Krumholz, musical director, Brian Saxon, choreography, Jack Webster, designer Stephen Gray, with Jane Sailer. March 1-29.

TR COMPANY (52 8888)

The Thompson Opera by Bertolt Brecht, music, Kurt Weill, producer, Jerie Milson, designer, David Bell, with Geoff Greenidge, Barbara Woss, Judith Anderson. March 20-April 21.

DANCE

QUEENSLAND BALLET COMPANY

(218 3135)

On tour

QUEENSLAND BALLET THEATRE

(229 1611)

Swan Lake Act 2 and 3 March 17-22.

OPERA

QUEENSLAND OPERA COMPANY

(228 7749)

Alan Stewart, director, John Thompson, conductor, Graham Young, designer, Mike Bright, with Philip Ball, Margaret Russell, Henry Howell. 19 Feb - 1 March.

CONCERTS

QUEENSLAND ARTS COUNCIL

(221 5908)

Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra. March 27.

Wagon Robin Brownie - touring Qld.

For further contact Don Batchelor on 338 8311

SA

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL THEATRE

OPERA THEATRE (51 0121)

Among Company of New York Elizabeth I by Paul Foster, directed, designer Lewis Cullen March 7, 8, 10, 12

The White Devil by Webster, director, Michael Kahn March 13, 14, 15
La Cica Company: How El Merca (puppet), director Jean Buxton March 17-22

TROUPE AT THE RED SHED

Copper and Company by Sharon Clarke and David Allen March 18-19

THE STAGE COMPANY

Center for the Performing Arts: London and Am Fleck by Ken Ross, director, Brian Dehman March 19-22, 24-25

UNION HALL (51 0121)

Songs From Babylon: After by and with Robyn Archer, also with Robyn Nevin, director, Peter Brighton March 8-22

THE QUARRY, Tea Tree Gully (51 0121)

Center for International Theatre Creations: Ebu by Alfred Jarry, director, Peter Brook March 18, 19, 20, 14, 15
The R, director Peter Brook March 22, 23

Confessions of the Brat, director, Peter Brook March 26, 27, 28, 29

Dialogue with Peter Brook, SRS-A, Pavilion, March 26, 29

PLAYHOUSE (51 5131)

Star Theatre Co: Mission: Planet of Whitefield, director, Colin George March 8-24

King Stag by Carlo Gozzi, adapted, Nick Knight, director Nick Knight March 13-24

Readings of three new Australian plays March 11, 20, 27

ARTS THEATRE (51 0120)

Metbourne Theatre Co: *Big River* by Alex Baro, director, John Sumner March 7-15
Mabou Mines: *Dressed Like An Egg* from Cologne, director, JoAnn Akaberis March 18-22

The Heartache and Sorrow Company: The Case of Katherine Mansfield compiled and performed by Cathy Downes March 24-29

THE SPACE (51 0121)

Sydney Theatre Co: *The Goring Will: All Together and Putting It On The Road* by Croy and Eard, director, Richard Wharmist March 18-29

Metbourne Theatre Co: *Captain Lazar* by Patrick Cook, director, Richard Bradshaw, music Robyn Archer March 10-15

SCOTT THEATRE (51 0121)

Young People's Programme: *The Fire Kidder* by Maxwell Davies, director, Helmut Bakula March 9-13

Circle May and Alfred Muller: *When Krupp Walked Alone* March 16

Theatre des Jeunes Amies: *Les Lions de Sable* by Maurice Yndt March 21, 22

St Martin's Youth Arts Centre: *The Zip and Zag Folies*, director Michael Macneuer March 25-27

Caro's Man by Allan McKay, director, Helmut Bakula March 28, 29

DANCE

FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 0121)

Ballet of the Komarcho Oper: Broken Swan Lake by Tchaikovsky and programme of short ballets, *Symphies of Youth Evening Dances, La Mer, Jeu de Cartes* March 25-29

OPERA THEATRE

Australian Dance Theatre: *Loburnish* by Christopher Bruce, staged by Jonathan Taylor, *Invaders at Ball Creek* by Jonathan Taylor, *Nya Balin*, Jonathan Taylor March 24, 27

Prague Chamber Ballet: Courants, March 25, and *Sakragrams* both Paul Samok March 26

Australian Dance Theatre and Prague Chamber Ballet together March 28, 29

THE SPACE (51 0121)

Mammy's Little Darlings and the *Australian Dance Theatre: Fiddie's Children* by Anna Taylor March 7-14

MUSIC

FESTIVAL THEATRE (51 0121)

Star Opera of SA: *Death in Venice* by Benjamin Britten, director, Jim Shawman March 8-15

ROYALTY THEATRE

Circle May and Ensemble: *Hoppla My Lichen* March 13

Sloan's Minstrels in *Three Men and Three Hares: Refined Jubilee Minstrels*, director, Leonard Sloan March 24-28

TOWN HALL

Circle May: *Search* through *Four Oracles* March 13

Even Good Ben Deserves Follow by Tom Stappard, director, Ken Harter, Conductor, John Harding, Australian Chamber Orchestra March 17-21

CONCERTS

Include James Galway

Jennifer Bate

Sir

Australian Youth Orchestra

Warsaw National Philharmonic Orchestra

Les Stroud

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Theatre, opera, dance and concerts. For details ring 51 0121

For further contact Life on Belton 223 8668

TAS

THEATRE

SALAMANCA THEATRE CO (33 5259)

Productions touring schools: *Memories* by Coveney Belgrade TIE Group (primary and lower secondary)

Mac Proles by Adrian Marshall (general secondary)

Rob by Nigel Triffin (general secondary) *Our Air Sea* by Michael Ignatelli (secondary) All directed by Greg Shoen, producer Barbara Manning, designer, Martin Chadwick

TASHMANIAN PUPPET THEATRE (23 7996)

The Saps of Punch and Judy, director, Peter Wilson, designer, Beverly Campbell Jackson

The Tasse Taper, director, Peter Wilson, designer, Alex Aschard, directed by John Loner

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)

La Cica Theatre Company of Bordeaux To March 1

Find The Lamb by Michael Petrovic, director Ted Crug, with Molly Nagden March 6-8

Mabou Mines Theatre Co March 11-15

DANCE

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)

Prague Chamber Ballet March 21, 22

CONCERTS

THEATRE ROYAL (34 6266)

Alexander Lagoya/Guitar recital March 19

For further contact the editorial office on (080) 87 4470

VIC

THEATRE

ALEXANDER THEATRE (543 2828)

Flower de Jeanne Arnet. *The Lion of Saint* presented by the Victorian Arts Council. Starts 2pm on selected days
AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING GROUP (347 7333)

Corbans, starring Bruce Spence
Nure Dinar by Howard Aronson, director, Wilfred Lunt and Richard Margulies, with Wilfred Lunt, Fay Maloney and Marilyn O'Donnell
COMEDY CAFE (Brunswick St, Eborac)
 Original Comedy entertainment starring Rod Quarmby
HOOPLA THEATRE FOUNDATION (653 7843)

Mythen Downstairs. *Quasimodo* by Ted Nelson, director. Charles Timpwell, designer, Tracey Way. World premiere. *Thou's The War To Be It*, with Chris Harris, a celebration of the comedy of Punch and Judy. From March 18
Playbox Upstairs. *Yakusaka Monks* by Roger Pulvers, director. Malcolm Robertson
Upright Down. *At The Bottom Of The World* by David Allen, director, Murray Copland, designer. *Jesus Tell*. From March 27

HER MAJESTY'S (661 5211)
Son of Aunty, devised by and starring Reg Lavinson, director, Peter Barry, with the Wellington Brews band
LAST LAUGH THEATRE RESTAURANT (419 6226)

The Winkles With The Fox, starring the Winkles. *Slim, Tammy, White Anzac*. Jack and Gaudipa, director. Evelyn Krup
MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (654 6861)
 Russell Street. *Amoral* by Harold Pinter, director, John Sumner, designer, Tanya McCalla, with Elizabeth Alexander, Neil Fitzpatrick and John Stanton. To March 22
Anticommunism. *Whose's Choice* by Harold Brighouse, director. Ernie Mason, designer. Hugh Coleman, with Jane Jago, Douglas Hodge, Simon Chivers, Sam Cahill, Kevin Calverbrook, Sydney Constant, Vivien Carter and co. To March 22
Athenium 2. *The Last Days of Alpha* adapted by David Edgar, director, Judith Alexander, with David Downer. To March 22

Other activities: Carian-UpandTributary, Roadmap for Playwrights

PILGRIM PUPPET THEATRE

(518 6550)

Circus Sempus and *Things* written and directed by Sue Cooper
UNIVERSAL THEATRE (489 3777)

Regularly changing programme of live entertainment

COMMUNITY THEATRE

ACTION THEATRE (429 1630)

Enacted The Comand's Dragon. Set production for children

ARENA CHILDREN'S THEATRE

(34 9667)

Secondary Schools programme. *The Whale — The Biggest Thing That Ever Died* by Ken Kesel and Salomance Co. *The Private Ear* by Peter Shaffer

CREATIVE ARTS THEATRE

(571 4054)

Who What When and Where? Jango Jancho and It's Gals. 4 bits of Green Girls, creative involvement plays for children, touring in schools

MILL COMMUNITY THEATRE PROJECT (932 22 2316)

Mel Theatre, Parkington St, Geelong. Activities and entertainment every Thursday evening

MAJOR AMATEUR THEATRES

Basil Theatre Group (762 1032)

Clayton Theatre Group (478 7702)

Hendburg Rep (49 2261)

Mahone Theatre Co (251 0030)

Pumpkin Theatre (42 8237)

Williamstown Little Theatre (528 4267)

1812 Theatre (796 8642)

DANCE

PALACE THEATRE (534 9657)

Boris Kormachev. *Opus Ballet*. *Swan Lake* and *Prokofiev's Two clear short ballets*. March 5-18

OPERA

PRINCESS THEATRE (662 2943)

Australian Opera. *The Magic Flute* by Mozart, producer, John Copley. Victorian State Opera. *Cover Op* by Rossini. In repertory

For further listings see *Concertgoer* on 781 7777

WA

THEATRE

DOLPHIN THEATRE

Take Me To Your Leader with Richard Slijper. To March 4
Montacute and Sorrow Company. *The Case of Katherine Mansfield* by Cathy Downes. 6-15 March

Northern Drift presented by Merry Livings and Alex Glasgow (Australian premiere) to March 15
BOLT IN THE WALL (581 2400)

Seven In One Season by Dorcas Clarke, director, Edgar Mitchell. To March 15
A Man Of Many Parts by Jack Hibbard (world premiere), director, Ray Ormrod. To March 15 late night

HAYMAN THEATRE, WAIT

(581 7030)

Cop Out by Cliff Green, director. Robert Englebert. To March 15

OCTAGON THEATRE

Acting Company of New York (*Elizabeth*) by Paul Foster. To March 5
What's the Man To Do It by Chris Harris and John Davis, with Chris Harris. March 6-15

PLAYHOUSE (325 3360)

National Theatre Co. *Produce On Parade* by Peter Nichols, director, Stephen Barry, designer, Tom Lopp. To March 15

PERTH CONCERT HALL

An Evening with Jasper Carrott

REGAL THEATRE (381 3257)

An Afternoon's Funer. *Bringing out Spide*. *Midnight and Friends*, with Mike McEllen and Carl Vere. To March 15

DANCE

WA BALLET COMPANY

Catherine's Wedding by Christian Perrot, and *Concerto Grosso* by Charles Cui. March 6-15
 Touring in Northern and Central Westcoast March 24-April 5

CONCERTS

PERTH CONCERT HALL

WA Symphony Orchestra. First family concert, conductor, George Tsintavis. March 28

Other Festival Concerts include:

Texas Music Trio (Brazil)

Van Goyt Quartet (USA)

Netherlands Wind Ensemble

Amelia Trio

For further listings see *Concertgoer* on 799 6639



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THEATRE AUSTRALIA'S PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 21

Name _____

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Answers:

1. Enchanted Scott is a prehistorical (6)
 2. Darkens Satan's head and Hell (6)
 3. Dame took out of line at the opera (6)
 4. Girl that is a prize bitch (6)
 5. This idea occurred at midday, rooted a tree (6)
 6. Oct a picture of the wine price, we hear (6)
 7. Actor sketched in return for a defensive instrument (4,6)
 8. Verse for King Richard? (7,5)
 9. Emancipators gathered river grass around 10.00 in the march (6)
 10. Vessel even old beer can fill (6)
 11. At home with the second-rate companion, it's inherent (6)
 12. Playwright experienced a Southern cold, and the Queen as well (8)
 13. Widespread in an exciting mélange of a fish and a little old lady (6)
 14. Avoided the inextinguishable crisis (overword) (6)
- Down:**
1. Joining priceless porcelain around a model (6)
 2. What's round a letter (thrown into the fireplace) (6)
 3. In a crash the gloomy are able to remove (7)
 4. Make a sky poem out of a non-started (4)
 5. Fireplaces right in the heart of the moors (7)
 6. This degree is stated strangely (8)
 7. Covers girl in the man's place (6)
 8. A 'white of a jungle fellow' (7)
 9. Catch little in the meshes coming back last night (7)
 10. The good man I throw over is appressed (6)
 11. Renaissance about the M.L.A. (8)
 12. Exam in which I expect to be noticed (10)
 13. Playwright I have on and out (7)
 14. Shout at fifty paces in undergrowth (6)
 15. Handkerchief, and rummed utterly rumed (6)
 16. The best words are in Sir Charles Surfact's hand (4)

The last crossword
drawn on March 25
will receive one year's
free subscription to
TA
The winner of last
month's Crossword
was Dr John Upton of
Earlwood, NSW

